

THE POLITICS OF PROGRESSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION:  
AS SEEN THROUGH THE CAREER OF  
HENRY GARLAND BENNETT

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By

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. . . so far as I am concerned, I would still be in the hills of Arkansas had there been in this country no such institution as . . . education. I cannot therefore but espouse the cause of that which freed me from the restraining clutch of economic want and geographic isolation.

Henry Garland Bennett  
"Retrenchment and the College"





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AS SEEN THROUGH THE CAREER OF  
HENRY GARLAND BENNETT

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## CHAPTER I

### A STUDY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

#### Thesis and Problem Statement

Henry Garland Bennett was a progressive educational philosopher who from 1907 to 1951 tempered his theories with a frontier individualism. Throughout his life, the educator employed tremendous political power to implement his philosophy and promote his own interests, as well. Bennett displayed patience and personality when mobilizing state and federal government officials, his education associates and Oklahoma citizens. In so doing, he implemented state reform in higher education and in developing nations across the globe. Like his intellectual Progressive Era fathers, Bennett held that society had a moral responsibility to replace the old frontier promise of free or cheap land as a vehicle for America's economic success, with cooperatively planned economic social change and new job training.

A recounting of Bennett's career as a public school and higher educational administrator revealed that he argued for professional educational association objectives like tenure and sabbatical leave, an Oklahoma coordinating board to eliminate political patronage and special interest decision-making throughout public education, the positive revolutionary effects of science and the technological expert, a land-grant college mission at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College to service working class students through instrumental extension and campus

curricula, public cooperation rather than state and federal government as the most stable means of rooting progressive social change and an American international commitment to pilot "underdeveloped" nations through the social alterations needed in the United States. The study of the philosophy and methods through which Bennett transformed concepts into functioning educational practices embellished the current body of knowledge concerning the history of progressivism after World War Two, the role of politics in higher education and the saga of Oklahoma, a young rural state struggling for economic survival in a rapidly industrializing nation. Furthermore, a synthesis of the material unearthed directions for a modern college or university president concerning both the productive and pejorative uses of politics to further his/her higher educational objectives.

#### Textual Summary

Though World War I marked the end of the Progressive Era in American history, Bennett remained loyal to the ideals which he had cultivated during his early years. Material in Chapter II, "Bridging The Gap, 1893-1919," depicted his familiar background and career experience before he became President of Southeastern State Teachers College now Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Oklahoma. The result of his early development produced a man able to appease populists yet to direct his career toward the fulfillment of progressive educational goals. Chapter III, "The Results of Idealism and Power, 1919-1928," explored Bennett's relationship to Columbia University progressives such as John Dewey and Thomas Briggs both during and after his doctoral study in the 1920's. In addition,

this section reviewed the decade's turbulent political climate in Oklahoma and the significant changes at Southeastern Teachers College under Bennett, despite the state's conservatism and disorganized government.

Chapter IV, "Consolidating Progressive Forces 1928-1934," revealed how, as President of Oklahoma A. & M. College in Stillwater, Oklahoma, Bennett and his staff expanded the college curriculum and service programs, in spite of Governor William Henry Murray's antagonism. Throughout Chapter V, "The New Deal: A Two Edged Sword 1934-1945," Bennett encouraged his administrators to seek government jobs and welcomed the federal money which invigorated A. & M., especially after Murray left office in 1934. However, the college president never abandoned the progressive vision that cooperation, rather than President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, could have catalyzed state and national economic prosperity. Federal programs throughout the latter thirties and early forties in Oklahoma fattened the state's pro-New Deal educational-political Democratic machinery, with which Bennett soon became publicly associated. During the early forties his extensive influence with state and national politicians and government agencies augmented Bennett's control over Oklahoma revenues. Consequently, state conservatives attempted to shatter the college president's power, by labeling him a machine boss and charging him with corruption.

Further research presented in Chapter VI, "Oklahoma's Industrialization Champion and Nationalism's Servant, 1942-1951," divulged that Bennett emerged remarkably unscathed by the political and legal battles which he and his enemies fought during the late thirties and early forties. A. & M. contributed to the Allied effort during World War II and

to nationalistic domestic causes after the war. He retained a policy-making role in the gubernatorial administration of Democrat Robert S. Kerr (1943-1947) and employed his intimate friendship with the state's chief executive to foster industrialization in Oklahoma and effect new professional, scientific and technical offerings at A. & M.

Chapter VII, "Oklahoma's Rural Scion as a Foreign Diplomat, 1931-1951," recounted Bennett's career as an international educational expert. The educator was delighted over the prospect of ingiting economic and social reform in Third World countries not yet made chaotic by unplanned and unharnessed industrialization. At last, Bennett could vindicate his hero, Woodrow Wilson, who had once dreamed of similar international cooperation through a League of Nations. As an educational expert in Europe for the United States and through his directorship of President Harry S. Truman's Point Four program, Bennett emphasized Third World self-determinism by teaching people to cope with a modern world, taking one evolutionary step at a time.

Chapter VIII, "Bennett's Place in History and Admonitions for Today," assessed the educator's progressive contributions coupled with his pragmatic compromises. This summary statement of his mistakes and triumphs included political lessons for any college or university president.

#### References Classifying Bennett's Progressivism

Like most early twentieth-century progressives, Bennett was a product of the previous generation. Thus, excellent sources from which to unearth his moralism and idealistic qualities appeared in scores of novels from his personal library. An avid reader, he owned dozens of works by nineteenth-century Realist authors, and the educator referred to them



often throughout his life. Bennett's collection included novelists Henry James, Edith Wharton, William Dean Howells and E. W. Howe.

Several classic historical pieces offered documentation from which to classify Bennett's social-educational tenants as progressive. A few most crucial to the study were Frederick Jackson Turner's The Frontier in America; Martin S. Dworkin's Dewey on Education: Selections, Lawrence A. Cremin's The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957, David W. Noble's The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917, Robert H. Wiebe's The Search for Order, 1877-1920, John Dewey's Individualism Old and New, Merle Curti's The Social Ideas of American Educators, C. Van Woodward's The Burden of Southern History, William E. Leuchtenburg's The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932, Arthur S. Link's Wilson: The Road to the White House, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917, articles "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920's?", "The Progressive Movement in the South," and "The South and the New Freedom," George E. Mowry's "The Urban Gentry on the Defensive," John D. Hicks' "The Persistence of Populism," and Richard Hofstadter's "The Thesis Disputed."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier In America (New York, 1920); Martin S. Dworkin, Dewey on Education: Selections (New York, 1967); Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1964); David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917 (Chicago, 1971); Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York, 1967); John Dewey, Individualism Old and New (New York, 1930); Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Totowa, 1966); C. Van Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, 1960); William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932 (Chicago, 1968); Arthur S. Link, Wilson: The Road to the White House (Princeton, 1947); Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and The Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York, 1963); Arthur S. Link, "The South and the New Freedom," The American Scholar 20 (Summer, 1951), pp. 314-324. Arthur S. Link "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920's?" American Historical Review 64 (July, 1959), pp. 833-851; George E. Mowry,

## References on Politics of Education

References on politics and higher education were less plentiful than were works on progressive thought.<sup>2</sup> However, some proved quite helpful in casting the legitimacy of Bennett's political power in perspective. His choice to become a formulator of government policy in Oklahoma, rather than one who was constantly besieged by it, was at least partially necessary. Without influence, Bennett would neither have kept his job nor effected higher educational change.

Some secondary sources substantiated that external forces in states other than Oklahoma have often directed the internal governance affairs of state colleges and universities. Early works such as Malcolm Moos and Francis E. Rourke's The Campus and the State, published in 1959, charged state governments with improperly meddling in higher education's internal administration.<sup>3</sup> Other more recent works have dealt more benevolently with such infringements. Henry Heinz Eulan's and Harold Quinley's State Officials and Higher Education: A Survey of the Opinions and Expectations of Policy Makers in Nine States and James Dunlap Nowlan's

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"The Urban Gentry on the Defensive," Arthur Mann, ed. The Progressive Era: Liberal Remainance or Liberal Failure? (New York, 1963), pp. 28-39; John D. Hicks, "The Persistence of Populism," Minnesota History 12 (March, 1931), pp. 3-20.

<sup>2</sup>For a dated but informative bibliographic essay covering all aspects of politics as it related to higher education see: Samuel K. Gover and Barbara Whiteside Solomon, "The Politics of Higher Education: A Bibliographic Essay,": Journal of Higher Education 39 (April, 1968), pp. 181-195.

<sup>3</sup>Malcolm Moos and Francis E. Rourke, The Campus and the State (Baltimore, 1959), pp. 1-16.

The Politics of Higher Education: Lawmakers and the Academy both held that state lawmakers in particular did intervene but only when the public mandated it.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Halperin's A University in the Web of Politics spotlighted the intense pressure brought by varying interest groups on all the educational and political personnel involved in selecting the board of trustees for Michigan's Wayne State University.<sup>5</sup> Both William M. Landeen's E. O. Holland and the State College of Washington, 1916-1944 and The Autobiography of David Kinley, a University of Illinois past president, disclosed the necessity for a president to ingratiate himself with influential state interest groups or individuals, in order to obtain support for his institution.<sup>6</sup>

The growing need to placate divergent external forces has minimized many presidents' authority over their own colleges and universities, claimed former Princeton University President Harold W. Dodds in The Academic President--Educator or Caretaker?<sup>7</sup> Elaborating on the same theme, John D. Millett in New Structures of Campus Power noted that beginning with the Great Depression in 1929, higher educational demands for money

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<sup>4</sup>Henry Heinz Eulan and Harold Quinley, State Officials and Higher Education: A Survey of the Opinions and Expectancies of Policy Makers in Nine States (New York, 1970), pp. 52, 127-154; James Dunlap Nowlan, The Politics of Higher Education: Lawmakers and the Academy (Urbana, 1976), pp. 37-98.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Halperin's, A University in the Web of Politics (New York, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>William M. Landeen, E. O. Holland and the State College of Washington, 1916-1944 (Pullman, 1958), pp. 3-10; David Kinley, The Autobiography of David Kinley (Urbana, 1949), pp. 45-50.

<sup>7</sup>Harold W. Dodds, The Academic President--Educator or Caretaker? (New York, 1962), pp. 1-35.

forced college leaders to make deals, which restricted their governance authority in order to breathe economic life into threatened institutions.<sup>8</sup> Another insightful book, Education and Politics at Harvard by Seymour Martin Lipset and David Riesman recorded the inevitable entanglements involving higher educational institutions and national political movements, whether the university role was causal or reactive.<sup>9</sup> Illustrating the former, at least on a state level, E. Alden Dunham in Colleges of the Forgotten Americans: A Profile of State Colleges and Regional Universities, sketched how in the 1960's East Carolina college president Leo Jenkin, somewhat similarly to Bennett, turned the tables and kept North Carolina state legislators and other officials in his debt, thereby using them to help build East Carolina College in Greenville. In many respects, Jenkins (not the lawmakers) had the upper hand.<sup>10</sup>

#### Regional Historical Groundwork

For the Bennett study, background information on Oklahoma politics came from Arrell M. Gibson's Oklahoma: History of Five Centuries, H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan's Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History and Anne Morgan's Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years.<sup>11</sup> Another useful

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<sup>8</sup> John D. Millett, New Structures of Campus Power: Success and Failures of Emerging Forms of Institutional Governance (San Francisco, 1978), pp. 33-34.

<sup>9</sup> David Riesman and Seymour Lipset, Education and Politics at Harvard (New York, 1975), pp. 3-14.

<sup>10</sup> E. Alden Dunham, Colleges of the Forgotten Americans: A Profile of State Colleges and Universities (New York, 1969), pp. 62-64.

<sup>11</sup> Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: History of Five Centuries (Norman, 1964); H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (Norman, 1977); Anne Morgan, Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years (Norman, 1977).

but unfinished book on politics in Oklahoma by Danny Goble and James Ralph Scales will soon be available.

Though authors of Oklahoma history made either scant or no reference to Bennett, two dissertations and one book outlined the progress of the Oklahoma Education Association, Southeastern State Teachers College, and Oklahoma A. & M. College during Bennett's presidency of each. They were Joe Hubbell's "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965", Stanley W. Hoig's "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma" and Philip Reed Rulon's Oklahoma State University--Since 1980, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

Other references covered additional portions of Bennett's life work and centered more on him, rather than on an account of the organization or institution which he spearheaded. Jerry Leon Gill, in The Great Adventure: Oklahoma State University and International Education briefly mentioned some of Bennett's overseas service which began A. & M.'s later participation in international education.<sup>13</sup> Yet, Rulon's "Henry Garland Bennett: The Father of the 'Great Adventure' In University Contracts Abroad" described in detail the events of the educator's early foreign service, particularly his efforts to establish a land-grant college in

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<sup>12</sup> Joe Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970, pp. 5-13; Stanley W. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 13-154; Philip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University--Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1975), pp. 219-259.

<sup>13</sup> Jerry Leon Gill, The Great Adventure: Oklahoma State University and International Education (Stillwater, 1978), pp. 6-10.

Ethiopia.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, "The Helping Hand" by Richard D. McKinzie and Theodore A. Wilson presented the progress of President Harry S. Truman's Point Four program under Bennett, its director.<sup>14</sup>

Special collections of papers and documents at three libraries provided key primary research material, essential to the discovery and classification of Bennett's progressive philosophy. They were the Oklahoma State University, Harry S. Truman and State of Oklahoma libraries. Both state and national newspapers were also helpful. Yet, the personal interviews conducted with surviving state and national lawmakers, political aides, journalists and educators who were close to Bennett humanized the study with insights and facts which the past had otherwise left unrecorded.

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Reed Rulon, "Henry Garland Bennett; The Father of the 'Great Adventure' in University Contracts Abroad," The Red River Valley Historical Review 2 (Summer, 1975), pp. 255-272.

<sup>15</sup> Richard D. McKinzie and Theodore A. Wilson, "The Helping Hand," American History Illustrated 24 (December, 1972), pp. 32-41.

## CHAPTER II

### BRIDGING THE GAP, 1883-1919

Not long before most Americans closed the door on a liberal reform era in 1919, Henry Garland Bennett, a dedicated progressive, became president of a small teachers' college, Southeastern State Normal School. Yet, the new conservative temper of the twenties did not erase the progressive impressions of his formative years. They had schooled him to believe that public school and higher education could provide social mobility for the progeny of a frontier era, the landless disinherited children of early twentieth-century Oklahoma.

#### Bennett's Background

Bennett probably never heard the words, but at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, a young historian named Frederick Jackson Turner articulated the fears of many rural Americans like Henry's parents, Thomas and Mary Bennett. The scholar lamentingly pronounced the end of the American frontier and the possible destruction of democracy.<sup>1</sup> For Turner, the free land had been what later scholars called a "safety valve" which attracted the industrial worker surplus from the East and therefore made it easier for all working classes to either obtain decent wages or grasp

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<sup>1</sup>David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917 (Chicago, 1971), pp. 22-27.

cheap land. In another work, he wrote that, "it is to the realm of the spirit, to the domain of ideals and legislation, that we must look for Western influence upon democracy in our own days."<sup>2</sup>

More contemporary historians like Richard Hofstadter have since taken issue with Turner's ideas. Hofstadter and other critics claimed that the lure of open territory never promoted opportunity at all. Instead, farming was just another business which required at least an initial investment.<sup>3</sup> Yet, many turn-of-the-century scholars and lay people alike believed Turner correct. In fact, a few weeks after his portentous speech, hundreds scrambled for a stake in the last national event of its kind--the Oklahoma Cherokee Outlet land run.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the events of the 1890's signified the end of an era and challenged a new generation of Americans to face the twentieth century with other means by which the American Dream (a chance for all) could be fulfilled.<sup>5</sup>

Many urban young people never mourned the passing of President Thomas Jefferson's yeoman farmer or President Andrew Jackson's rustic individual, both nineteenth-century symbols of democratic thought and the Democratic party. Instead, they gladly idolized new American Republican

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<sup>2</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, "Later Explanations and Developments," Ray Allen Billington (ed.), The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? (New York, 1966), p. 25. Also, one of the themes of Turner's book, The Frontier In American History, published in 1920, emphasized the increasing social demands for collective decision-making as a frontier community evolved into an industrial society.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Hofstadter, "The Thesis Disputed," Billington (ed.) The Frontier Thesis, pp. 100-106.

<sup>4</sup>Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, 1965), p. 300.

<sup>5</sup>Noble, The Progressive Mind, pp. 1-36.



industrialists like John D. Rockefeller, whose "rags to riches" careers promised success to the shrewd and industrious.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the Bennetts remained loyal southern Democrats. Protective tariffs for Northern manufacturers, Eastern bankers' control of capital, Southern planters' absentee ownership of land and farming costs like high freight rates made it difficult for a rural Southerner to be a Republican dedicated to the industrial progress of the age.<sup>7</sup>

Born in a log cabin on December 14, 1886, Bennett lived with his family among the worn faces, calloused hands and broken dreams of northwestern Arkansas cotton farmers. His father, Thomas Jefferson, a purblind Baptist minister, preached and farmed throughout Arkansas and northeastern Texas until 1895.<sup>8</sup> That year unfolded Thomas and Mary's own special plan concerning how their children would bridge the gap between their humble beginnings and a prosperous future, when the family moved to Arkadelphia, Arkansas. There, the Bennetts enrolled Henry and his two sisters in Ouachita College's parochial school where their son progressed through the ranks and eventually graduated from the college in 1907 with an A.B. (Bachelor of Arts) degree.<sup>9</sup> Thomas and Mary's stubborn adherence to education as the fulfiller of democratic ideals planted seeds of thought which, for Henry, later grew into a progressive philosophy.

Although progressivism was a largely twentieth century urban

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<sup>6</sup>Turner, "Later Explanations and Developments," p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>W. J. Cash, The Mind of The South (New York, 1941), pp. 148-189.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979); Phil Bennett, Personal Interview, Oklahoma City (June 17, 1979); Philip Reed Oklahoma State University--Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1975), pp. 220-221.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid; Phil Bennett, Personal interview; The Bear (Arkadelphia, 1907), p. 19.

middle-class movement, rural reform fever had taken root in the late 1800's among people quite similar to Bennett's family.<sup>10</sup> Couched in the setting for Turner's thesis, populism had been an agrarian political force which (as Bennett and other progressives later insisted) held that each person should have a chance to excell.<sup>11</sup> Turn-of-the-century southern populism lost much of its innovative fervor and pledged adulation to earthy reactionary demagogues Tom Watson of Georgia, Cole L. Blease of South Carolina, Jeff Davis of Arkansas and Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, to name the more prominent. Although these men found followers among a restive lower socio-economic echelon class, they offered primarily solutions of escape (such as racial hatred) from the realities of class oppression.<sup>12</sup> However, a collection of progressive legislators and governors throughout the South did emerge during the early 1900's and actuated state reforms including railroad regulation, direct primaries and popular elections of United States Senators.<sup>13</sup>

Like their rural predecessors, the more modern reformers contended that additional local, state and federal laws would protect the individual

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<sup>10</sup>George E. Mowry, "The Urban Gentry on the Defensive," The Progressive Era: Liberal Renaissance or Liberal Failure? Arthur Mann, ed. (New York, 1963), pp. 31-32.

<sup>11</sup>John D. Hicks, "The Persistence of Populism," Minnesota History 12 (March, 1931), pp. 1-3, 17-18; C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, 1960), pp. 141-166.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur S. Link, "The Progressive Movement In The South," North Carolina Historical Review (April, 1946), p. 179; Noble, The Progressive Mind, pp. 84-89.

<sup>13</sup>Link, "The Progressive Movement in the South," pp. 183, 188, 192.

against banking and business monopolies' vice.<sup>14</sup> This combination of middle and lower socio-economic class consciousness spread throughout the country during Bennett's high school and college years and continued into his early days as an educator. Though he retained empathy for and communication with the populist small farmers of Arkansas and Oklahoma, he identified with the progressives. Resembling his parents, he came to believe that education was not only an excellent vehicle through which he could succeed, but it was the mechanism for social change.

Albeit parts were traditional, the Ouachita College curriculum planted further progressive seeds for Bennett's beliefs. The institution combined a strong emphasis on Victorian era manners, the Baptist faith, the classical liberal arts college and the pragmatism of men like John Dewey and William James.<sup>15</sup>

A separate department for Bible instruction and the numerous religion clubs served as outlets for campus recreation and stressed the importance of moral turpitude. Also college rules precluded any mingling of males and females and stated that, "a faithful, earnest pupil has no time for such diversion."<sup>16</sup> In addition, students wore uniforms to center their attention on academic endeavors.<sup>17</sup>

The Schools or Divisions of Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Modern Languages, English, Literature, History, Economics and Fine Arts displayed

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<sup>14</sup>Hicks, "The Persistence of Populism," pp. 17-18.

<sup>15</sup>Catalogue and Announcement of Ouachita College 1906-1907 (Arkadelphia, 1907), pp. 16-25, 73-97.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

the legacy of the medieval and American colonial college traditions.<sup>18</sup> However, Ouachita exposed Bennett to science and the methods of scientific inquiry, pinnacles of progressive interest. The young scholar worked as an assistant to his chemistry instructor, while taking courses in the School of Science. Bennett's degree program also called for classes on Dewey and James, whose empiricism was the precursor of twentieth century innovative psychology.<sup>19</sup>

Dewey's instrumentalism existed at Ouachita, not only in theory, but also in practice. The School of Business taught bookkeeping and accounting techniques, to name a few, and Bennett appeared interested in the application of these utilitarian skills. In 1907 he was one of two business managers of The Bear, Ouachita's college yearbook.<sup>20</sup>

Bennett's other activities in school were somewhat limited, compared with those of other classmates, although his efforts highlighted an interest in leadership. He served as President of the Athletic Association from 1906-1907 and President of the Philomathian Literary Society in 1907.<sup>21</sup> Bennett's work schedule probably excluded him from any other involvements. He delivered mail on horseback and did other manual labor to help pay his tuition, fees and educational expenses which came to at least \$50 a year.<sup>22</sup> However, the family aided Bennett's money-making

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-97.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75, 85-90.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-23, 52-53; The Bear, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview; Catalogue and Announcement of Ouachita College, pp. 98-100.

efforts. His parents took in boarders, Thomas continued to preach, and Henry's sister Lois (a 1902 Ouachita graduate) taught piano in the college conservatory.<sup>23</sup>

Much of Bennett's adult personality and ideals were a product of progressive and traditional training, and his taste in literature reflected his eclectic education. He did not prefer the deterministic Naturalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers like Stephen Crane, Frank Norris or Theodore Dreiser.<sup>24</sup> Instead, he admired the idealism and optimism of Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Bennett made numerous references to Emerson, such as his Sunday school lesson admonition, "hitch your wagon to a star."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the educator relished the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, which Ouachita college students explored.<sup>26</sup> Taken with the author's portrayal of Ulysses return home, only to find a wife and friends who had abandoned him, Bennett once used this setting to revive hope for solutions to modern problems.

Come, my friends,  
Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off; and setting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the path  
Of all the western stars, until I die.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 221; Catalogue and Announcement of Ouachita College, p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Garland Bennett Personal Library, "Special Collections (Stillwater). Bennett's personal Library lacks the works of these authors, and he never quotes them in his speeches or other writings.

<sup>25</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson quoted in Henry Garland Bennett, "A Cluster of Stars," Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>26</sup> Catalogue and Announcement of Ouachita College, pp. 82-84.

<sup>27</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson quoted in Henry Garland Bennett, "A Newer World."

Bennett's other favorite authors were nineteenth-century Realists William Dean Howells, Henry James, Edith Wharton and E. W. Howe. Like Bennett, they proposed ethical and, in Howells' case, sometimes socialistic resolves to the personal and professional decisions which people of all social classes faced daily.<sup>28</sup>

Influenced by the religious and secular moralism of the century that spawned him, Bennett's social values resembled those of progressive social gospel advocates. Echoing their principles, Bennett longed for warring Americans such as industrialists and workers to employ humanitarian brotherhood as their arbitrator and in doing so insure progress.<sup>29</sup>

He feared

that the people of our present civilization are getting tired . . . and sinking slowly into a moral and social apathy. . . . Only through the ministry of higher altruism can civilization expect to respond with increasing hope and ardor to the beckoning figures of science, education, and invention as they point the way to industrial, social, and cultural utopias beyond the ken of the most fantastic dreamers.<sup>30</sup>

Such change came, the young philosopher held, if individuals worked to better themselves and society.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bennett's Personal Library contained almost all of Howells' and James' novels, in addition to some by Wharton and Howe.

<sup>29</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, The Search For Order 1877-1920 (New York, 1967), pp. 137-139.

<sup>30</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, Speech delivered before an annual conference of extension workers, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>31</sup> Newell Dwight Hillis, A Man's Value To Society (New York, 1896). This book was part of Bennett's personal collections, promoted the concept of social responsibility which ran throughout Bennett's writings.

Gaining Public Educational, Political,  
and Personal Experience

Bennett's first attempt at providing for himself and aiding others came soon after graduating from college, when he first taught at a business school in Texarkana, Arkansas.<sup>32</sup> In 1908, like thousands of other people in search of a more lucrative existence, Bennett migrated to southeastern Oklahoma.<sup>33</sup> His new home was filled with the familiar faces of poverty--those of cotton farmers and coal miners.<sup>34</sup> Aside from the few short years before and during World War I which signaled the "golden age of agriculture," most farmers had never known prosperity. Many were tenant workers, and even those who owned their own land desperately needed information about ecological and utilitarian agrarian practices. Similarly, the proletariat were largely unskilled and poorly educated, and many needed vocational training. Yet, most all of the poor held stubbornly to the "american dream" of owning land, and the frustration from their unrequited desire fomented radical political outbursts in the new state of Oklahoma.<sup>35</sup>

The reaction of socialist Oscar Ameringer who came to Oklahoma and Indian Territories just before statehood to enlist coal miners and other blue collar workers into his political party illustrated the dearth of

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<sup>32</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 221; Henry Bennett Jr., Personal interview.

<sup>33</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 221; W. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History, (Norman, 1977), p. 94.

<sup>34</sup>Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 30, 1979).

<sup>35</sup>Morgan and Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 93-103.

opportunities in the state. Although accustomed to urban poverty, he was stunned by the, "indescribable aggregation of moisture, steam, dirt, rags, unshaven men, slatternly women and fretting children."<sup>36</sup>

Although the Oklahoma State Constitution contained progressively generated notions such as initiative and referendum, for many years special interest groups dominated Oklahoma government. Reacting to these poor circumstances, thousands of farmers joined the socialist cause. However the state party achieved little, and its philosophy, unlike the national Socialist party, was tempered with cries of individualism and bigotry.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the people in Bennett's home territory were all part of a newly formed state, politically inept at constructing public services. Little Dixie, as many called southeastern Oklahoma, awaited a leader.<sup>38</sup>

Bennett accepted the challenge of securing a means by which these people could lead more materially fruitful lives, and in the process he rose to political and professional prominence. His first Oklahoma job was teacher and Superintendent of the Boswell, Oklahoma Public Schools, and later he became a Principal and then Superintendent of the Choctaw County Schools. In 1909 he attained the superintendency of the Hugo, Oklahoma, city schools and remained there until he moved into higher education administration in 1919.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Oscar Ameringer, quoted in Morgan and Morgan, Oklahoma, p. 96.

<sup>37</sup> Glen R. Roberson, "The Oklahoma Founding Fathers as Progressives"--Presented at Missouri Valley Historical Conference (Omaha, 1977), pp. 4-10; Morgan and Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 93-103.

<sup>38</sup> Roberson, "The Oklahoma Founding Fathers," pp. 10-15.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Hamilton (Unpub. article on Henry Garland Bennett, Stillwater, 1951).



Although Bennett's early years produced merely a common looking man, slightly less than average height, his relaxed yet commanding nature won him many friends throughout his adopted state. By blending and cultivating several personal characteristics, he became the type of person whom people willingly followed. He showed an interest in all character types, almost never forgetting a name. Like anyone destined to become a leader, Bennett's common demeanor allowed people to identify with him. For when conducting business or just socializing, he adjusted his conversation to the interests of those around him. Yet, when he spoke, this less than picturesque individual began to gain in stature, and his audience soon knew who was the more powerful. His speeches projected the force of a preacher's message, which made Bennett's visions for educational innovation sound majestic. With his listeners emotionally aroused, the young dreamer then explained how his maxims could better the listeners' lives. Because he was able to relax, rather than intimidate people, they stood vulnerable, ready for the educator to absorb them into the ranks of an army which he was gathering to fight for public educational change in Oklahoma.<sup>40</sup>

Bennett seized an excellent occasion to begin statewide reform in 1909 when one Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) member from each county cast his vote, and a majority elected the twenty-three year old

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<sup>40</sup> M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979); Joe Hubbell, Telephone interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); John W. Hamilton, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 13, 1979); Bill Abbott, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 15, 1979). These characterizations are a combination of the words of many of the people I interviewed. The ones listed are among the more explicit on either Bennett's early career or personal appeal.

superintendent as its president.<sup>41</sup> The group was an affiliate of the National Educational Association (NEA), founded in 1905; and like so many other professional groups, it was dedicated to the new science of education.<sup>42</sup> Mirroring NEA, OEA encouraged teachers to reach for expert status through better training which in turn improved the entire public education system. The associations also worked for better salaries which tended to bolster the middle socio-economic class, a traditional example of social mobility in a capitalist democracy.<sup>43</sup>

Though OEA was dedicated, change in Oklahoma did not come overnight. Educational conditions, particularly in the southeastern part of the state gave Bennett and his co-workers numerous causes for which to work.<sup>44</sup> Like their president the educators usually hailed from the areas in which they taught.<sup>45</sup> In many cases they were poorly or inadequately trained and always grossly underpaid. In 1914, less than twenty-five percent had the equivalent of a high school education, and teachers' salaries were slightly more than \$350.00 per year. Even though the OEA encouraged teachers to improve their professionalism by enrolling in college summer sessions, the association could not alone resolve the problems. To obtain goals such as better salaries, state aid to public schools, and non-partisan superintendency appointments or to insure that ambitious

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<sup>41</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 221.

<sup>42</sup>Wiebe, The Search For Order, pp. 118-120.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid; Joe Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970), pp. 5-10; Hubbell, Personal interview.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Hawks, Personal interview.

politicians did not sell state land designated for public school use, Bennett became involved with politics. Mustering OEA support was only the first step toward mobilizing political force. Next, he had to convince the state's succeeding governors and legislators of the need for reform.<sup>46</sup>

Aligned with lawmakers whose local constituencies stood to lose revenues, Bennett's comrades successfully opposed Governor Lee Cruce's efforts to eliminate two of the normal and several of the other state schools not under the authority of the Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture.<sup>47</sup> The OEA also stopped lawmakers from vacating three teacher training institutes which it had once helped to create. In the last year of Bennett's presidency the group secured from the State Legislature, at Democratic Governor James B. Robertson's insistence, the first state appropriation to common schools in Oklahoma, a sum of \$100,000.<sup>48</sup>

Noble as these state and national efforts were, the professionalization of teachers throughout the United States remained about a decade behind that of other groups, like doctors or lawyers, in controlling higher educational admissions and regulating professional standards.<sup>49</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>46</sup> Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association," pp. 6-10; Hubbell, Personal interview.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association," pp. 6-10.

<sup>48</sup> Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association." pp. 9-10; Hubbell, Personal interview; Gibson, Oklahoma, p. 357.

<sup>49</sup> Wiebe, The Search For Order, p. 120.

conditions in Oklahoma trailed those in most other states, making it all the more necessary for educational spokesmen to be politically adroit.<sup>50</sup>

With at least the partial objective of fostering personal contact between public school or higher educators and state officials, Bennett and Little Dixie educators John Vaughan and Mel A. Nash, formed a fraternity called the Ancient and Beneficent Order of the Red Red Rose. All of the members, whether they were teachers, businessmen or politicians, had a special interest in public school and higher education.<sup>51</sup> The organization was a secret society, the conclaves of which afforded its male members the chance to socialize and relax; while an auxiliary group called the Blue Blue Violets gave like-thinking women similar occasions.

Governor Robertson, one of the first brothers of the Rose, was definitely an educational enthusiast. In 1919, he actuated legislation upgrading the state's six normal schools to teachers' colleges and appointed a commission to study higher education coordination needs.<sup>52</sup> Robertson was also a significant force in Bennett's personal career. When the Governor directed the Oklahoma State Normal School Board of Regents to purge some of the institutions' leadership, Bennett became President of Southeastern.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 118-120; Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association," pp. 6-13. Henry Garland Bennett, "Ox Cart Education," Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>51</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 222; Red Red Rose File, Special Collections, Vertical Files (Stillwater).

<sup>52</sup>Gibson, Oklahoma, p. 357.

<sup>53</sup>Stanley W. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1971), p. 197. Bennett and Robertson remained close; for the college president was a pall bearer at the former governor's funeral in 1938. The O'Collegian (March 3, 1938).

Not only did Bennett fraternize and establish friendships with educators and politicians through OEA and the Red Red Rose, but he remained concerned for rural Oklahomans whose children always swelled his schools.<sup>54</sup> He abhorred tenant farming and the diminishing amounts of available land, charging that it led to "peonage and peasantry."<sup>55</sup> He forever upheld that an agriculturally based economy not only promoted individualism, but allowed the entire country to be self supporting through the provision of its own staples. Citing England as a foreboding example of what could become of a country which strayed from its agrarian base, he once told a group of farmers that, ". . . the temptations of an urban industrialism fed by international trade lured . . . [Great Britain] away from . . . agrarian policies, and . . . I seriously wonder whether her past greatness can be regained."<sup>56</sup> Bennett fretted that in America, as well, "the stalwart pride and personification of independence and individualism [the farmer] will be forced from the soil."<sup>57</sup> On another occasion, he extrapolated further that a major cause of the Civil War was an unjust tariff formed to protect industrial prices from foreign competition. Unfortunately, Bennett averred, the result was to drain, "the reserves of wealth from the South and West."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>William Kerr, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); Hawks, Personal interview; M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview.

<sup>55</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Basic Factors in Farm Recovery," Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Have We Kept the Faith," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

In many respects, Bennett exemplified his populist ancestors, in that he encouraged farmers to apply collective processes for the ultimate aim of preserving individualism. He once explained that Americans could achieve the most efficient production from agrarian and industrial enterprises through both professional and government planning.<sup>59</sup> He supported cooperative associations which taught modern farming methods like crop rotation, soil building or terracing for the ultimate purpose of maintaining the family farm, a monument to individual initiative.<sup>60</sup>

Probably viewing his own actions as part of an historical effort to protect the past and yet stimulate change, Bennett pictured Abraham Lincoln as one of the great heroes of the Western world. Once in a public address, Bennett recalled with sadness the terrible price of his own life which Lincoln paid in his efforts to unify and lead the country. The orator criticized the actions of subsequent Republican Progressive Era Presidents like William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt whom he depicted as enemies of the farmer. Both Roosevelt's and Taft's nationalistic policies exploited foreign cheap labor and rich resources which competed with American staple producers. Thus, Bennett asserted that Democratic President Woodrow Wilson merely inherited the Republican nurtured worldwide imperialistic conditions which drew the country into the First World War.<sup>61</sup>

Bennett's views on foreign affairs were uncommon even to many

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<sup>59</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "A Triumvirate of Progress," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>60</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Land Use and the Farm Family," Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>61</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Heroes of the Western World."

progressives, though his objectives seemed to be based on a defense of the American farmers' potential contribution to the economy. Nevertheless, Bennett did join the minority of Americans who supported the League of Nations, and he defended Wilson's efforts to bring the United States into its fold. "There is no room in the world for nationalism . . . , just as in Lincoln's day there was no longer room . . . for sectionalism," Bennett once told an audience.<sup>62</sup> Crestfallen at Wilson's defeat, the young admirer reasoned that the President had, "dared to dream of realizing human brotherhood, [and] he challenged the diplomacy of the world to find a better practical solution . . . to the sorry problem of international anarchy."<sup>63</sup>

For Bennett, as for Wilson, 1919 was the end of an era. Unlike the President, who had become a physically and mentally broken man, the date marked a beginning for Bennett. Convinced that success came only to the singleminded, he sold a small amount of land and a few head of cattle which were the remnants of his small business career and began augmenting his already considerable following of both professional and common Oklahoma people.<sup>64</sup>

In the decade which followed, many more citizens became attracted to Bennett who represented a refreshing caricature of a southern political-educational leader. He defied the image of the traditional Dixie demagogue who exuded a, "swaggering, hell-for leather bluster that the South

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview; M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview.

[usually] demanded of its heroes."<sup>65</sup> Although Bennett's public lexicon smacked of the "common touch," his manners were strictly those of a graceful and gallant gentleman. He not only practiced nineteenth-century social customs but filled his library with works by southern romanticists like Thomas Nelson Page.<sup>67</sup>

Bennett had no use for demagogic histrionics, partially because the shrewdness of a planner lay within him. He longed to succeed rather than to make a scene. "If a man ever knocks you down, don't get up and start punching; just crawl around on the ground until you find a rock big enough to swiftly level him," Bennett once warned a colleague.<sup>68</sup>

As the educator's state popularity grew, he attracted from his adherents a group of professionals who composed the nucleus of his Southeastern State Teachers College administration. The new president maintained this practice throughout his career using these employees as a "brain trust" or bestowing them with roles too controversial for a college president.<sup>69</sup> The inner circle at Durant included Vaughan, the Registrar; Napoleon Conger, Director of the Training School; Claude

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<sup>65</sup> Cash, The Mind of the South, p. 291.

<sup>66</sup> Kerr, Personal interview; M. R. Lohmann, Personal interview, Stillwater (June 20, 1979).

<sup>67</sup> Henry Garland Bennett Personal Library.

<sup>68</sup> William Abbott, Personal interview. Perhaps Bennett learned his battle strategy from adolescent wars at Ouachita. The Bear characterized him as a "mother's boy," while his small stature provoked some of his classmates to pick on him.

<sup>69</sup> M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview; John Hamilton, Personal interview; Murl Rogers, Personal interview, Stillwater (July 26, 1979); Willis A. McBride, "Letter to Lib and Joe" (March 15, 1957), Correspondence Relating to Bibliographic Data, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).



Dunlap, Professor of Rural Education; Sue MacNutt, the president's personal secretary; Schiller Scroggs, Professor of Public School Administration; and Julia Stout, Professor of Public School Music.<sup>70</sup> Dunlap later became president of another state institution, Northeastern State Teachers College,<sup>71</sup> while Vaughan was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction.<sup>72</sup> Yet, they all remained Bennett's faithful supporters.

In addition to his education family, the thirty-three year old college president now had a wife, Vera Pearl Connell, and three children, Henry Jr., Phillip and Liberty. Bennett met Vera shortly after he arrived in Hugo, and they were wed on January 27, 1913, in her parents' home in Durant.<sup>73</sup> She was the daughter of a businessman, attorney, and federal judge. Moreover, she was a deeply religious and impressively tutored woman, who had attended a Presbyterian Indian mission school in Indian Territory and taken courses at the University of Chicago. Vera then taught at the normal school in Alva, Oklahoma, before she and Bennett were married. Yet she continued her teaching career by giving piano lessons long after her new family moved to Durant.<sup>74</sup> The contacts with people which she made through her instruction of Sunday school classes, participation in Civil War history clubs and membership in the Daughter's of the American Revolution provided excellent public relations for

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid; Rogers, Personal interview; Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928 (Durant, 1928), pp. 2-4.

<sup>71</sup> E. T. Dunlap, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 5, 1979).

<sup>72</sup> Directory of Oklahoma, 1979 (Oklahoma City, 1979) p. 91.

<sup>73</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 221-222; Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview.

<sup>74</sup> John W. Hamilton, Personal interview.

her husband. They also offered a great sense of accomplishment for this woman whose spouse and his associates dominated the family's public image.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RESULTS OF IDEALISM AND INFLUENCE, 1919-1928

As leader of the "Durant Mafia" or "Durant Gang" (common terms referring to Bennett's inner circle)<sup>1</sup> the new teachers' college president extended and defended his progressive philosophy throughout the 1920's. Both his scholarly efforts as a graduate student and the innovations at Southeastern evidenced Bennett's steadfastness to his old ideals.

#### National Trends During the Twenties

Ironically, many middle-class Americans like Bennett also continued to long for individual opportunities during the twenties. Yet, they rejected the progressive means of social reform and voted in record numbers for 1920 Republican Presidential candidate, Warren G. Harding, who promised a return to "laissez-faire" government. An invigorated quest for money and prestige did for education what progressives had worked years to achieve. The public schools, colleges and universities molded and shaped their curricula to further Americans' goals. Higher education enrollments doubled throughout the twenties, so that a million students

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<sup>1</sup>Joe Hubbell, Personal telephone interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979)

were enrolled in 1930, while dollars for research and scholarship multiplied as well.<sup>2</sup>

Thoughtful critics during the new decade such as authors Sinclair Lewis or Sherwood Anderson continued to depict the shallowness of both town and country, denouncing both the ignorance in social regression and the danger in moving aimlessly forward.<sup>3</sup> Bennett used Lewis' Main Street in public addresses to slam American "smugness" and material lust. A person became a productive human being, Bennett declared, when after having succumbed to foolish self-interest, he realized how to better himself and society.<sup>4</sup> In speeches he captured the essence of Lewis' intent when criticizing middle America; it was not to predict doom, only to warn of the potential for it. Bennett shared Lewis' hope for mankind, which was inherent in George Babbitt's warning to his son not to mimic his father's shallow life.<sup>5</sup> However, Bennett's positive outlook caused him to reject William Faulkner's literary portenders of American demise. Bennett criticized Faulkner's message in The Sound and the Fury which contended that society had become aimless and rootless. The educator countered that,

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<sup>2</sup>Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1964), pp. 682-684.

<sup>3</sup>Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (New York, 1922); Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg Ohio (New York, 1919).

<sup>4</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "A Salutation of the Dawn," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, Babbitt, pp. 398-401. Bennett and Lewis were further linked, because they both admired Edith Wharton to whom Lewis dedicated Babbitt.

"historical continuity and consistency of human life makes possible its being a thing of purpose, of achievement, of intelligent endeavor."<sup>6</sup>

### The Oklahoma Political and Educational Scene

At first it looked as though Oklahomans would join the Republican bandwagon which supported public education, because Harding carried the state in 1920. Moreover, that same year voters seated a majority of Republicans in the State House of Representatives, an unusual practice for the largely Democratic polity. Governor Robertson, inundated with criticism from a new, more conservative State House, missed being impeached by only one vote in 1921.<sup>7</sup> Though Robertson spent most of 1921 and 1922 attempting to keep his job, quell miners' strikes and suppress race riots, his administration marked only the beginning of a tumultuous decade. As in other parts of the country, in Oklahoma the reactionary Ku Klux Klan grew each year to eventual epidemic proportions, boasting from 70,000 to 100,000 members.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the decade, other Oklahoma voices and guns ascended to challenge the new political "right wing." The bickering and plotting among state officials which ensued retarded any progress for better funded public school or higher education. Juxtaposed to the Klan was a revitalized version of Oklahoma socialism represented by a party called the

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<sup>6</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "A Salutation of the Dawn."

<sup>7</sup>Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, 1965), pp. 102-103.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 359-360; H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (Oklahoma, 1977), pp. 104-108.

Farm Labor Reconstruction League. Fearing the Klan's power, many non-socialists joined the league to elect John Walton as governor in 1922. His administration, like others before him, was another disastrous example of massive patronage purges at schools like Oklahoma A. & M. where he placed George Wilson, a socialist sympathizer as president. The State Legislature soon impeached and convicted Walton in 1923 of eleven charges including illegal accrual of campaign funds. However, in 1926 the pendulum swung "right" again, for the people elected Klan sympathizer and conservative Democrat Henry S. Johnston the state chief executive. When Johnston reversed himself and supported liberal Democrat Al Smith for the nation's President in 1928, it was the last straw for the State House which attempted to impeach him twice. The second time was successful, and the Oklahoma Senate ousted Johnston in 1929.<sup>9</sup>

Preoccupied and coping with political extremism, the state lawmakers ignored many of public education's needs. Consequently, legislative appropriations to public schools in Oklahoma did not reflect the national trends. Funding climbed to a comparatively "low plateau" in the early 1920's and did not increase for the remainder of the decade.<sup>10</sup> A task force, which the United States Bureau of Education sponsored to survey both public school and higher education, reported in 1922 that disorganization and a lack of planning reigned at all the state institutions. It further charged, "local loyalties and political exigencies" were

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<sup>9</sup>Gibson, Oklahoma, pp. 358-369.

<sup>10</sup>Joe Hubbell, "A History of The Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970), pp. 11-13; Henry Garland Bennett, "Oklahoma's Need for Education," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

responsible for making most of the state's decisions concerning public education.<sup>11</sup>

#### Bennett's Educational Progressivism was Reinforced

Oklahoma history illustrated that as Southeastern's president who vied for money and support, Bennett was forced to deal with a factional and unreliable state government. These difficulties did not weaken his determination. In 1923, he earned a Master of Arts Degree at the University of Oklahoma and a Doctorate of Philosophy in 1926 at New York's Columbia University Teachers College.<sup>12</sup> Obtaining leave from Southeastern and money from the Rockefeller Foundation, Bennett went to Columbia in the summer of 1925, convinced he was studying at the most prestigious teachers college in the nation.<sup>13</sup> Surely, under President Nicholas Murray Butler and professors John Dewey, Thomas H. Briggs and George D. Strayer, Bennett did just that.<sup>14</sup>

After graduating, the Oklahoma educator applauded Butler's demand

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, The Coordination of the State Institutions for Higher Education in Oklahoma (Durant, 1927), pp. 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University-Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1975), p. 222; Roland Rinsland, Registrar, "Letter to Courtney Ann Vaughn" (September 13, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979); M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Columbia University in the City of New York Teachers College Announcement of Teachers College School of Education School of Practical Arts, 1925-1926, pp. v, vii, 22-23, 38-39; Rulon Oklahoma State University, p. 222.

for a morally strong progressive national president.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, much of Bennett's writing both during and after his graduate school days reiterated the distinctly Deweyan notion that man should use his intelligence and reason to prevent a society from being commandeered by special interest groups, rather than being governed by democratic consent. Resounding Frederick Jackson Turner's demand, Dewey exclaimed that, "democracy has to be born each generation; [and] education is the mid-wife."<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920's, Dewey, the only surviving founder of pragmatism, cautioned in Individualism Old and New that most Americans were mistakenly adhering to some prototype of the old frontier ideal of individualism. Because the natural evolution of society from rustic towns to large cities was collective, not individualistic, Dewey proposed that collectivism was instrumental in solving modern problems. Even so, he held that a person could experience a new type of intellectual individualism by cultivating his own mind. Dewey confessed that one would never find permanent consistencies in a world beset with uncertainty, but a person could attain security in the ability to help direct and plan his own dynamic society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Land Grant College in a State Setting." The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry Garland Bennett, "The World Depression" (Oklahoma City, 1931), pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Dewey, quoted in Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Totowa, 1966), p. 499.

<sup>17</sup> John Dewey, Individualism Old and New (New York, 1930). A theme of the entire work was the reconciliation of "old" individualism with the twentieth century. Bennett referred to Dewey's work in numerous writings but cited Individualism Old and New, in "Your Education in the Light of the Depression," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).



Concurring with Dewey's conclusions, Bennett later addressed an audience on the subject of change. He stated that although progress made it difficult for people to be certain of anything, they should meet their futures, "with flexible, scholarly minds . . . adequately trained to perceive, to analyze, to compare, . . . to judge [and be] sensitive to youth in whatever form we find it."<sup>18</sup> Of course, to Bennett and Dewey, public education could nurture and guide such scientific inquiry. The institution was the most potentially powerful catalyst for effecting socio-economic change, for without it to provide graduates with the ability to prosper economically and appreciate their culture, democracy was impossible, Dewey maintained.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Bennett explained that Americans needed an education which prepared them to participate in the new industrial society. Like Dewey, Bennett held that we could only, "preserve our ideals of democracy from becoming mere cant" by guaranteeing that each citizen had educational opportunities.<sup>20</sup> The college president explained further in other writings:

that education in America shall always be the way up and out for every boy or girl who aspires to higher levels of usefulness. Let us believe always in the right of every individual to attempt preparation for whatever walk of life he may choose.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "A Changing World," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>19</sup> Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators, pp. 511-512.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The American College and American Culture," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>21</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Back to School," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Yet, Bennett always contended, as did author Lewis, that this intelligence was, "firmly enough rooted [in] tradition . . . [and] to socially constructive needs."<sup>22</sup>

Bennett's Columbia advisors, Briggs and Strayer, concentrated their efforts on less philosophical and more practical progressive reforms like increasing articulation between and within public school and higher education. The two professors founded a training curriculum for educational administrators which emphasized that professionally attended colleges and universities prevented the destructive influence of politicians' personal battles and thereby facilitated publicly responsive higher education leadership.<sup>23</sup>

The national political machine exposure in the early twentieth century (centered on men like New York State Senator George Washington Plunkett who saw nothing wrong with using graft and patronage to staff public service institutions) probably fueled Briggs and Strayers' reform fervor. However, Bennett came to Columbia already convinced of the need for more professional and less political higher educational administration, especially in Oklahoma.<sup>24</sup> Working closely with Briggs, Bennett's dissertation became an adaptation of his and the professor's progressive theories. Bennett's argument was systematic and revealing, even though he deleted many Oklahoma politicians' names throughout his work. Yet,

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Back to School," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>23</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 222. A secondary citation was necessary here, because the Thomas Briggs File has disappeared from the Oklahoma State University Library.

<sup>24</sup> E. H. Bingham and Mel A. Nash, Personal interview, Edmond (July 27, 1979); Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview.

the study was an obvious indictment against state patronage within and parsimonious appropriations to Oklahoma public and higher education.<sup>25</sup>

Bennett began by describing the nature of Oklahoma's eighteen colleges and one university, stating that all their diverse and similar purposes demanded greater coordination. However, he continued, the internal leadership problems of each institution must be abated before this articulation was possible. For example, improperly staggered gubernatorially appointed governing boards, Bennett noted, endowed the state's chief executive with the capability to control internal college governance decisions such as hiring and firing any personnel. The author explained, during a nine month period in 1923, Governor Walton replaced each member of every governing body except the Board of Education. Walton also replaced the presidents of three colleges and the university, Bennett added. He was particularly disheartened by the ephemeral administration and governance of Oklahoma A. & M. College which had employed seven presidents before statehood, only one leaving of his own volition. To prevent such interference, Bennett suggested that citizens alter the managing Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture so that the Governor appointed and the Senate approved a group of seven to nine members, all of whom served annually staggered terms.<sup>26</sup>

After having identified and proposed solutions for the internal institutional problems, Bennett enumerated the policy deficiencies due to lack of planning and cooperation between Oklahoma's fourteen colleges

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, The Coordination of the State Institutions, pp. 58-62.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 4-61.

and one university.<sup>27</sup> Identical programs at neighboring institutions forced all to compete for money and students, driving a wedge within higher educational cooperation.<sup>28</sup> Quoting an unnamed State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Mel A. Nash)<sup>29</sup> Bennett wrote, "'it is unfortunate that our state colleges and university are forced biennially to go before the legislature [with] the attitude of beggars, lobbyists, . . . and unpopular solicitors.'"<sup>30</sup>

Interinstitutional competition required Oklahoma college presidents to seek political alliances and to trade favors for money which another school might have needed more, Bennett theorized. Local interests generally played a major role in such machinations, he explained. Using the establishment and abolition of a school of mines in Oklahoma he illustrated how expediency, rather than need or opportunity, too often dominated the function of many state colleges. Bennett recalled how in 1917, Governor Robert L. Williams closed the Oklahoma School of Mines and Metallurgy located at Wilburton, Oklahoma. Then in 1919 the State Legislature reopened the institution at Miami, Oklahoma, a center of vast lead and zinc deposits. Despite the excellent resources for moving a school of mines where, "special interests" forced the school's conversion in 1924 to Northeastern Junior College. Bennett concluded his section on

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<sup>27</sup> The need for social and institutional planning was an early progressive concept dating back to Alsworth Ross' book Social Control, published in 1901.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, The Coordination of the State Institutions, pp. 67-68.

<sup>29</sup> Directory of Oklahoma, 1979 (Oklahoma City, 1979), p. 90.

<sup>30</sup> Mel A. Nash, quoted in Henry Garland Bennett, The Coordination of the State Institutions, p. 68.

higher education's problems by adding that due to the lack of state coordination among education objectives, many colleges would not accept each other's credits, making it difficult for the student who must transfer to continue his education.<sup>31</sup>

Before presenting his reform proposal, Bennett cited Oklahoma's noble yet limited efforts to coordinate higher and public school education before 1926. He mentioned Governor Robertson's budget law which altered the old method requiring each institution to argue for its costs before the Legislature. According to the new measure, the Governor and State Auditor prepared allocation requests based on each school's filed reports and presented them to legislative appropriation committees which ultimately granted the money.<sup>32</sup>

Bennett was more impressed with the efforts of the Board of Education which by a 1911 law became a governing-coordinating body for Oklahoma higher and public educational institutions. The educator commended this agency for enhancing college preparatory programs and eliminating duplication within and between some colleges. Moreover, the board's promotion of a tenure policy, salary schedules and sabbatical leaves displayed an admirable progressive spirit, the author noted.<sup>33</sup>

Finally Bennett explained his system for supervision of all Oklahoma education, including private parochial and higher education. He first proposed three separate governing boards, each to oversee approximately one-third of the state's institutions. The educator suggested an optimum

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 74-76.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-86.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-97.

structure of nine members holding staggered terms.<sup>34</sup> His requirements for membership exemplified a progressive prototype. This ideal person was, "well educated, public spirited, [took] an active interest in educational and social problems, . . . [was] successful in his [own] calling and [commanded public] confidence," Bennett asserted.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the plan allowed no recompense save what the board member spent while fulfilling his job.<sup>36</sup>

Structured similarly to the institutional governing boards, Bennett created a statewide coordinating agency which elected college presidents, determined salaries, presented fiscal needs to the state, allocated appropriations to the college division, sanctioned administrative policy decisions, created institutional rules, made comparative studies on enrollment, expenditures, building equipment or any other "general" needs, organized advisory councils, studied legislative proposals establishing new or altering existing functions of institutions, licensed all professions under state supervision, "and sanctioned charters for all new private and public schools."<sup>37</sup>

To the Board of Education Bennett assigned his coordination tasks.<sup>38</sup> He reasoned that the State Constitution had already designated the directorate to approve public school curriculums, instructor certification, teacher training programs and other higher educational functions.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-114.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-113.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 113-118.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

Furthermore, the board operated within Bennett's philosophical framework by advocating that no institution should offer a plan of study which competed with a more beneficial one in use at another school.<sup>39</sup>

#### Bennett Employed Politics for Progressive Ends

For fifteen years Bennett tried to implement his proposals. He campaigned for coordination at OEA and other educational association gatherings. Yet, over a decade passed before a version of his goals became law.<sup>40</sup> Bennett also appealed to his personal friends and political allies who helped realize his Oklahoma higher education aims. However, his victories produced one of the most ironic developments of Bennett's career, for the eschewer of political-educational machinations eventually became a masterful politician in his own right.<sup>41</sup> He encouraged Democratic public school contacts to vie for public office and by so doing strengthened education's position in the State Legislature.<sup>42</sup> John Vaughan, Southeastern's former registrar, ran for State Superintendent

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Problems Confronting OU and A. & M.," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater). Many interviewees also discussed Bennett's dedication to the coordinating board concept.

<sup>41</sup> State v. Henry G. Bennett, et. al., Criminal Court of Appeals of Oklahoma, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 745-746, Oklahoma State Library (Oklahoma City). Testimony entered into this court record evidenced the political influence and close associations which Bennett had established by the 1930's.

<sup>42</sup> Hubbell, Personal telephone interview.

of Public Instruction in 1920.<sup>43</sup> Ferman Phillips, also sympathetic to Bennett, served concurrently as the Superintendent of Schools at Atoka, Oklahoma, and as a State Representative.<sup>44</sup> Bennett gave the most fortuitous political advice to William Holloway, who had been Principal of Hugo High School while Bennett was Superintendent. In 1926, state Democrats elected Holloway Lieutenant Governor, and he later stepped into the state's chief executive position in 1929, when the Legislature impeached and convicted Johnston.<sup>45</sup>

The potential for political power in both Little Dixie and its contiguous regions became apparent with the elections of southerners like Vaughan and Holloway. Their constituents were people who shared socio-economic class interests, and they expressed their class consciousness by voting for such a man. Quickly they became the majority opinion in Oklahoma.<sup>46</sup> Almost two decades later, migration to other states and the continuous urban population movement this voters' bloc persisted. Robert S. Kerr, a southeastern Oklahoma apprentice-trained lawyer, won his bid for Governor without carrying Oklahoma City, Tulsa or the state's northwestern counties.<sup>47</sup> Expertly, these politicians shared Bennett's

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<sup>43</sup> Berlin B. Chapman, "Letter to Courtney Ann Vaughn" (March 6, 1979); Directory of Oklahoma, 1979, pp. 90-91. Later chapters develop Vaughan's penchant toward progressive education and friendship with Bennett.

<sup>44</sup> Hubbell, Personal interview.

<sup>45</sup> Lyle Boren, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (July 14, 1979); Murl Rogers, Personal interview, Stillwater (July 26, 1979).

<sup>46</sup> William Kerr, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (July 30, 1979); E. T. Dunlap, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 5, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> Hawks, Personal interview.



success in addressing old populist demands but provided progressive responses such as improved educational programs and opportunities.

#### Bennett's Accomplishments at Southeastern

Although, throughout the twenties, Bennett encountered his share of enemies, the growth of Southeastern under his leadership evidenced the college president's ability to win support for his causes.<sup>48</sup> Unlike several other teachers' college leaders, Bennett kept his job and obtained leave for continuing his own education, while curriculum innovations, enrollment and physical plant growth at Southeastern surpassed all six of the other state teachers' colleges.<sup>49</sup>

Like the other normal schools which became teachers' colleges in 1919, Southeastern upgraded standards for acquiring both one and two-year certificates. While teacher certification had originally been the sole purpose of the normal school, the Durant college now offered a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science degree. Formerly, it had offered only seven plans of study, and the resulting certificate represented six years work, four of secondary and two of college. However, in 1928, Southeastern provided eight four-year courses of general study and twelve other

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<sup>48</sup>M. C. Hamilton, Personal interview. Throughout Bennett's life public challenges to his authority in higher education unearthed caustic and usually conservative opponents.

<sup>49</sup>Stanley W. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Higher Education in Oklahoma" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 130-154. Although Hoig did not single out Southeastern, a comparison of the six teachers' college histories during the 1920's attested to Southeastern's predominant progress.

more demanding degree programs for students training to be either a specialist instructor or a supervisor of teachers within a given academic discipline.<sup>50</sup>

Under Bennett, the college generated new methods to help students stay in school. It established a student employment agency which put people to work on campus and in private homes and businesses throughout the area. The college also obtained money from local merchants to augment a scholarship fund for needy matriculants.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, activities such as a physical education program, a literary society, a band and an orchestra gave students the opportunity to fraternize during their spare time which made them feel a part of the school.<sup>52</sup>

During Bennett's nine-year stint, the number of departments increased from fifteen to twenty-nine, and student enrollment reached 1,500. The college maintained and even embellished its fine arts courses, and most of the changes reflected a growing emphasis on the physical sciences.<sup>53</sup> The capabilities of the Public School Music and Art Department multiplied as their facilities grew, while a consolidated Fine Arts

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.; Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928 (Durant, 1927) pp. 21-33; Bulletin of the Southeastern State Normal School, 1919, (Durant, 1919), pp. 9-15, 18-20. L. David Norris professor of Southeastern State University, who is writing a history of the institution, has found that Bennett was largely responsible for its prosperity and innovations during the twenties.

<sup>51</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-48; Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 19-20, 46-122.

Department canopied the old Departments of Piano, Music and Violin.<sup>54</sup>  
 However, Psychology, Physiology, Zoology, Geography, Geology, Economics, Library Science and Political Science enhanced the already existing Agriculture, Chemistry, Physics, History, English and Literature, Foreign Language and Mathematics Departments.<sup>55</sup>

Juxtaposed to these secular subjects was a new Religion Department which, it seemed, was an ever present mark of Bennett's humanitarianism. For instance, some courses taught the application of religion to modern social problems and others provided an analysis of different faiths.<sup>56</sup> As to the question of how the Biology Club, which studied all modern scientific theories, dealt with the conflict between evolution and fundamentalism one could only guess. Bennett once commented that although teaching evolutionary concepts was within the bounds of academic freedom, Oklahoma higher educators must compromise the ideal situation, in order to survive public scrutiny.<sup>57</sup>

Serving people was also an essential part of Bennett's educational commitment. Departments of Mechanical Drawing, Industrial Arts and Printing broadened the curriculum opportunities beyond general education and teacher training.<sup>58</sup> Community oriented departments, similar to some

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-39, 49-51, 96-103; Bulletin of the Southeastern State Normal School, 1919, pp. 44-48.

<sup>55</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 46-48, 52-56, 65-66, 79-85, 92-98, 111-114, 118-122.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-117.

<sup>57</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "What Makes a College Great?" The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>58</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 68-90.

offered at Columbia, became part of the Southeastern program during the twenties. Students and citizens benefitted from a Rural Education Department, which offered subjects such as agrarian sociology and community leadership in addition to a separate course of study for future country-school teachers. Finally, each year, Southeastern held a rural life conference for teachers, students and inhabitants of surrounding areas where speakers and workers discussed club work and community problems.<sup>59</sup>

Other activities during Bennett's presidency brought outsiders into the college family to learn. Southeastern's staff cooperated with the county teachers' association by speaking at meetings and assisting public schools to build better programs. Furthermore, new Departments of Health and Extension were geared to bringing the college to the people.<sup>60</sup> Here were the first examples of Bennett's enthusiasm for prototypic progressive innovations which the University of Wisconsin initiated beginning early in the century.<sup>61</sup>

To staff Southeastern's expansion, Bennett's administration hired professors from universities like Columbia, Harvard or Chicago. The faculty more than doubled during the college president's nine year tenure, and many who required further graduate education were given sabbatical leaves.<sup>62</sup> Physical plant additions accommodated the college's growth.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19, 30; Columbia University in the City of New York Teachers College Announcement, pp. 77-78.

<sup>60</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 17-18, 40, 43.

<sup>61</sup> Lawrence A. Cermin, The Transformation of the School; Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1961), pp. 161-168.

<sup>62</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, pp. 6-10; Bulletin of the Southeastern State Normal School, 1919, pp. 3-4.

During Bennett's administration, Southeastern obtained over \$400,000 in legislative appropriations which built a heating plant, a training school annex, an education building, a science hall, an auditorium-gymnasium and a library.<sup>63</sup>

During the twenties, East Central and Northeastern were the only other teachers' colleges which came close to matching Southeastern's physical plant growth. However, the competitors took much longer to accomplish similar campus expansions. While Northwestern kept pace with some of Southeastern's new general education courses, the former did not introduce rural education until the early thirties.<sup>64</sup>

The Normal School Board of Regents refereed competition for students between the state teachers' colleges by not allowing them to advertise beyond their specified geographical districts.<sup>65</sup> However, Southeastern's rural and community education emphasis under Bennett's administration generated an alumni association which together with a student placement service helped recruit growing numbers of matriculants from the college's bailiwick.<sup>66</sup> These two measures could have done nothing but enhance former students' loyalty to their alma mater, by helping them attain employment and bringing them together for special occasions.

Bennett's public service activities drew attention to him and the college. He was quite active in Rotary International and its Durant branch organization, composed primarily of a merchant socio-economic

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-91.

<sup>64</sup> Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions," pp. 136, 146, 149.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>66</sup> Southeastern State Teachers College Bulletin, 1927-1928, p. 16.

class.<sup>67</sup> However, Bennett declared that he was dedicated to the group's original purpose. Founded at Chicago, Illinois, in 1905 during the Progressive Era, its purpose was to service communities by building parks and improving city services, to name only two.<sup>68</sup> Paradoxically, in Babbitt, Lewis satirized Rotary Club participation, because of the shallow motives (like meeting the "right" people) most individuals had for joining.<sup>69</sup> Even if Bennett's intentions were similar to those of Lewis' characters, the college president's public addresses propagated the group's ideals. In many speeches before church groups, Rotarian rallies and other professional caucuses Bennett uttered his familiar preachments that as a man benefitted materially from a society, so was it his responsibility to help someone else.<sup>70</sup> He once sounded that

. . . energy, capacity, aggressiveness, undoubtedly play their part in this world's plumbing of a man's amount. I do not deny them, although I shudder to contemplate a world with these traits turned loose . . . without the curb of higher standards. The true attributes of a great person . . . are, humility, devotion to worthy ends, steadfastness, personal purity, . . . integrity and altruism.<sup>71</sup>

By 1929, Bennett's reputation for expertise and political power had

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<sup>67</sup> Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview; The O'Collegian (June 30, 1928), pp. 1 & 4.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "A Newer World," Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>69</sup> Lewis, Babbitt, pp. 179-189.

<sup>70</sup> Randall Jones, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 3, 1979); Bingham and Nash Personal interview; The O'Collegian (June 30, 1928), pp. 1 & 4.

<sup>71</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, Annual Extension Workers' Conference Speech, The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

flowered, and he had prepared himself for a professional move upward.<sup>72</sup> Vera and Henry now had produced the last of their five children, Mary Elizabeth and Thomas. Moreover, Bennett's Columbia Ph.D. completed his professional pedigree. The young college president had proven that he not only was shrewd enough to survive the political turmoil of the 1920's but to lead his institution to higher academic ground. Thus, in 1928, Governor Johnston, faced with the threat of impeachment and conviction, bowed to the will of men like Lieutenant Governor Holloway and Agriculture Board President Harry Cordell.<sup>73</sup> That year, the overseers of Oklahoma A. & M. College encouraged Bradford Knapp to resign and hired Bennett as the college's next president.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>The O'Collegian (June 5, 1928), p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 219.

<sup>74</sup>Walter W. McCollum, "Letter to Tom Bennett" (March 27, 1957), Correspondence Relating to Bibliographic Data, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence); "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (July 1, 1928).

## CHAPTER IV

### CONSOLIDATING PROGRESSIVE FORCES, 1928-1934

Bennett ascended to the Oklahoma A. & M. presidency partly through the aid of his political friends. However, the school had hired a man filled with the same higher educational beliefs espoused by Wisconsin Governor Robert LaFollette and former President of Wisconsin University, Charles Van Hise, both nationally acclaimed early tenth-century progressive leaders.<sup>1</sup> Although the Great Depression, which began in 1929, loomed against Bennett's initial success at A. & M. yet, he labored throughout the early thirties to construct a state coordinating board, accentuated the progressive land-grant college mission of extension and oncampus service to society first introduced at Wisconsin University,<sup>2</sup> hire and cultivate other like-thinking administrators at A. & M. and foster both external interest groups and college staff loyalty to him.

#### Bennett Confronted State and Federal Political Realities

Prior to Bennett's administration, Oklahoma A. & M. had been, to an alarming degree a pawn in state squabbles. Before statehood, the school

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1961), pp. 161-168.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 162.



employed six presidents only one George Monrow (1895-1899), was not forced from office.<sup>3</sup> The school was an available patronage plum, for it as the state's largest agricultural college, educating almost 3,000 students in 1928 and employing nearly 200 campus faculty and approximately 200 more extension workers.<sup>4</sup> In spite of the college's problems, resident Bradford Knapp (1921-1928) was a well qualified agriculturalist whose father Seaman A. Knapp had originated college affiliated 4-H Club work in 1908.<sup>5</sup> When the Board of Agriculture moved to replace him in 1928, college personnel and interested citizens protested the action. However, when faced with the reality that Knapp would submit his resignation, his supporters called for a non-partisan, out-of-state educator to take his place. The board attempted to placate the protesters by asking a committee of Oklahoma A. & M. alumni, headed by M. A. Melton, to search for a new chief executive. Yet when the board met on July 1, 1928 in Oklahoma City to consider the former students' candidates, Bennett was waiting in another room to be introduced as the next President of A. M. College.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stanley W. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 24-33.

<sup>4</sup> Otis Wile, "Brick Stone, Dreams and Travail," The A. & M. College Magazine 6 (January, 1965), p. 7; Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater): Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1938), pp. xvii-xxi.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick B. Mumford, "The Land Grant College Movement," Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station: Bulletin (Columbia, 1940), pp. 133-134.

<sup>6</sup> Phillip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University--Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1975), pp. 219-220; Berlin B. Chapman, "Dr. Henry G. Bennett as I knew Him," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 33 (Summer, 1955), p. 159; State Board of Agriculture Minutes (July 1, 1928).

Faced with potential opposition from people with whom he had to cooperate, wilyly Bennett implemented a bit of his homespun sophistry. "A mule can't kick and pull at the same time," he said.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, to prove it Bennett soon convinced both friends and enemies alike to work for his goals. He denied being only a political hack and immediately inaugurated a state and national public relations speaking tour which covered at least 50,000 miles per year.<sup>8</sup> Bennett expounded his progressive philosophy of education by emphasizing the potential benefits to all Oklahomans of the land-grant college mission which was defined at the University of Wisconsin, prior to the First World War, as a college of the people, bringing useful general education to the masses and to the nation's farmers.<sup>9</sup> Bennett voluntarily addressed hundreds of high school commencement assemblies, city service clubs, Grange-like rural groups, state and national professional organizations, church gatherings and youth clubs. Often he shared podiums with friends, Governor Holloway or State Superintendent Vaughan. Bennett not only took his message to the people, but he also scheduled meetings on campus for various gatherings, where he usually spoke.<sup>10</sup>

During the first few years of his A. & M. college presidency, Bennett had already become a Stillwater civic leader, a member of the committee

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, quoted by Murl Rogers, Personal interview, Stillwater (July 26, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> The O'Collegian (June 5, 1928), p. 1; Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979); Raymond Girod, Personal interview, Stillwater (February 28, 1979); Weldon Barnes, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 14, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Cremin, The Transformation of the School, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; The O'Collegian. Throughout the 1930's and on into the forties, the college newspaper carried dozens of stories covering many of Bennett's speaking engagements.

on Agricultural Service for the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce, the Cimarron Valley Boy Scout Council and the Lew Wentz Foundation Board (an Oklahoma A. & M. student load association).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Oklahomans began to view the educator as an agricultural expert. Bennett, who had no formal agricultural training, became such a recognized authority that by the mid 1940's, very few farm-oriented bills or state policy decisions were enacted without his consultation.<sup>12</sup> Bennett's reputation also extended across state lines. During the thirties he spoke to the Southwest Chemurgic Clinic on utilizing forest resources, rotating new with old Southwestern crops, improving cotton farming and providing industrial substitutes for surplus crops.<sup>13</sup>

Much of his newly acquired reputation evolved because Bennett kept in touch with federal legislative agricultural innovations, along with Deans Dover Trent in Engineering and Carl Blackwell in Agriculture, he attended national conferences like a 1928 Federal Reserve Experiment in Soil Erosion Association meeting at Guthrie, Oklahoma.<sup>14</sup> Bennett also expressed interest in federal aid to farmers, via grants to institutions like Oklahoma A. & M. In 1929, he summarized President Herbert Hoover's unofficial committee report which concluded that the national government

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<sup>11</sup>The O'Collegian (June 4, 1942), p. 1; Ibid.; (January 10, 1929), p. 1; Ibid.; (February 6, 1929), p. 1. Ibid.; (September 16, 1928), p. 1. Ibid.; (March 11, 1931), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 30, 1979).

<sup>13</sup>The O'Collegian (October 24, 1937), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.; (January 3, 1928), p. 1.

should increase aid to public higher education.<sup>15</sup> During the 1920's, federal lawmakers joined Bennett in support of assistance to rural America and land-grant education. Although few urban progressives still existed, agrarian-oriented Congressmen produced the McNary Hays Bill in 1924 which guaranteed parity for farm products; it did not become law primarily because Republican President Calvin Coolidge vetoed the measure twice.<sup>16</sup> However, more successful bills provided funds which expanded land-grant colleges' curricula. The Pernell Act (1925) appropriated experiment station money for more social science research, and funds produced by the Capper-Ketchum Act (1928) embellished extension programs on a dollar matching basis with cooperating states.<sup>17</sup>

Bennett, keenly aware of the potential monies for A. & M., often visited the nation's agriculture and education bureaucrats in Washington, D. C. There, he also attended functions like Franklin Roosevelt's Presidential Inauguration in 1933, in addition to the yearly National Association of Land Grant Colleges and University meetings where speakers

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Federal Relation to Education by the National Advisory Committee on Education," *The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett*, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>16</sup> Arthur S. Link, "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920's?" *American Historical Review* 44 (July, 1959), pp. 843-846.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Richard Gilmore, "A Historical Study of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1967), pp. 142-143. Progressive Era federal lawmakers initiated twentieth-century legislation to land-grant higher education beginning with the Adams Act (1906), Smith-Lever Act (1914) and the Smith-Hughes Act (1917). These laws appropriated federal funds to college experiment stations, home economics or agricultural extension work and vocational training, respectively.

sometimes sounded progressive higher-educational messages.<sup>18</sup> Speakers like E. A. Bryan, President of Washington State College, reinforced Bennett's views when, in 1931, the former described the land-grant college as, "the beginning of a scientific revolution, whose full force is not yet spent."<sup>19</sup>

#### The Times Reaffirmed Bennett's Progressivism

Words of revolution and reform also reached Bennett, during the course of his civic activities. As Governor of the 124th Rotary International district, he and Henry Jr., (an Oklahoma A. & M. student at age fourteen) journeyed to Vienna, Austria.<sup>20</sup> Not only did this excursion nurture Bennett's anti-isolationist and pro-democratic sentiments,<sup>21</sup> but the political contacts he made there proved invaluable for the future. In Austria, he met and made a friend of Arizona United States Senator Clinton Anderson, who eventually became United States Secretary of Agriculture under President Harry S. Truman.<sup>22</sup>

After returning to the United States in 1931, Bennett enumerated a

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<sup>18</sup>The O'Collegian (November 13, 1930), p. 1. Ibid.; (February 28, 1933), p. 1. Numerous references to Bennett's Washington, D. C. trips existed in this news source throughout his A. & M. college presidency.

<sup>19</sup>E. A. Bryan quoted in Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station: Bulletin 419 (Columbia, 1940), pp. 64-65.

<sup>20</sup>Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview.

<sup>21</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "The World Depression" (Oklahoma City, 1931), Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>22</sup>Henry Bennett, Jr. Personal interview; Randall Jones, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 1, 1979). Chapter VII extrapolates on Bennett and Andersons' ties, particularly how they furthered the college president's international career ambitions.

set of international catalysts which he believed had brought about the World Depression. They were "World War One," the failure of international leadership, "the fallacy of industrialism," "the idea of democracy" and "the Russian experiment."<sup>23</sup> In elaborating, Bennett indicted the "victors of the last great war" for planting depression seeds. He cited the lack of international social and economic cooperation, despite the League of Nation's efforts. Undoubtedly, he was referring in part to the United States' failure to join the organization. Bennett further argued that the allies had saddled the defeated countries with large reparation debts and then stripped them of the resources and industry which did enable them to pay. The effort to punish the vanquished succeeded only in crippling much of the Western world's economy.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Bennett observed that the lack of agrarian based economies in countries throughout the world, coupled with industrial unemployment, had produced an impoverished class which subsisted in an era that for many was filled with material delights. Bennett reasoned that the Russian Five Year economic plan had staved off a catastrophic depression in the Soviet Union and thereby intensified many workers' impatience with Western democracy. Bennett explained that

the common man . . . [feels] . . . he is entitled to more out of life than he has been getting, [and] he is coming to the place where he will not continue to produce, to pay taxes [or] to submit unless a larger measure of the material things of life are given him in return.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "The World Depression: A Challenge for International Cooperation" (Oklahoma City, 1931), pp. 2-3.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-9.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

The poverty Bennett saw in Europe, the United States and especially in Oklahoma made him angry, because it sounded not the trumpet of progress but heralded the defeat of democratic opportunity. Of the 1920's, he once wrote, "we hardened under Harding, cooled under Coolidge and hungered under Hoover."<sup>26</sup> During the thirties, he assessed that

we are recovering from an orgy of industrialism which emphasized a tariff and foreign trade policy that was untenable, because it was based upon the fallacious idea that an industrial nation could continue indefinitely to exploit so called backward people.<sup>27</sup>

Those exploited, in the educator's view, were both the foreign laborers who worked cheaply in American factories abroad and the downtrodden small farmers in the United States. "This nation has been blinded by the fallacy of industrialism, as has the rest of the Western World," Bennett reiterated to Depression Era farmers.<sup>28</sup> The frontier was gone, and the result was, "the development of huge business enterprises for the purpose of exploiting natural resources of managing exchange and credit, and of furnishing public service. . . ."<sup>29</sup> These practices, Bennett announced, threatened the fundamental liberties expressed in the Bill of Rights, and

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<sup>26</sup> Henry Garland Bennett quoted by Burl Hays, Personal interview, (August 27, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Farm Tenantry and the Conservation of Rural Life," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>28</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Fundamental Principle in Economic Recovery," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>29</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Democracy and Individual Initiative," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

he admonished the people to demand an equivalent of the free land which America had once promised to all.<sup>30</sup>

He provided progressive solutions to the Depression problems which he identified. Throughout his speaking tour Bennett stressed the concept that "science could change the world," if only people utilized and harnessed it to better everyone. He told Oklahomans to take advantage of A. & M.'s research and improved farming technique to prevent land waste, for he said, "no nation can withstand the shocks of economic change unless it is firmly rooted in agriculture."<sup>31</sup> Many social changes were needed to readjust the "inequitable factors in economic and banking [interests] which piled up bank mortgages, increased tenantry and made ownership of the soil a precarious right."<sup>32</sup> However, Bennett maintained that higher education could do much to solve numerous farm problems like over-production and low demand for products. Because institutions such as Oklahoma A. & M. produced future wage earners, Bennett rationalized, it strengthened the middle class and hence its capability for farm products, the college replaced the old frontier as the new "safety-valve" by offering job training to landless farmers, workers and their children

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<sup>30</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "We the People," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry Garland Bennett, "The Fundamental Principle in Economic Recovery."

<sup>31</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Re-adjusting Agriculture to a New Age," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



for "secondary service" careers in transportation, public health, education and recreation, to name a few.<sup>33</sup>

#### Bennett Worked With and Placated State

##### Officials to Enact Reform

Under Governor Holloway, the State Legislature made great strides to finance Oklahoma A. & M.'s expansion. In 1929, it approved Bennett's entire requested biennium budget of \$4,614,105, a figure which marked the largest appropriation in the college's history.<sup>34</sup> Part of this went for a raise in faculty salaries. The Agriculture Board set Bennett's salary at \$10,000 per year which they soon raised to \$12,000 per annum. In addition, he had a campus home, a new car every few years and a maintenance allowance.<sup>35</sup> Bennett repaid the generosity of the Holloway administration by writing speeches and giving the new Governor higher educational policy advice.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.; Henry Garland Bennett, "Democracy and Individual Initiative," *The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett*, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>34</sup> Joe Hubbell, Personal telephone interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); Joe Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965" (Unpub. Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970) p. 15; *The O'Collegian* (November 27, 1928), pp. 1 & 4; Ibid., (April 3, 1929), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman "Dr. Henry G. Bennett as I Knew Him," p. 161; "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (June 1, 1928); Ibid.; (June 11, 1928); Ibid.; (July 17, 1929); Ibid. (January 4 & 5, 1934); Ibid.; (January 4, 5, & 6, 1933); *The O'Collegian* (January 29, 1930), p. 1. Bennett salary was excellent when compared to other state officials and the relatively low cost of living in 1929.

<sup>36</sup> Vernon B. Snell, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 9, 1929).

During the Holloway administration, in 1929, state lawmakers created a higher educational coordinating board similar to Bennett's 1927 proposal. All the state institutional presidents, the Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction and two other gubernatorially appointed citizens constituted membership.<sup>37</sup> However, some state college presidents' fear of outsiders persuaded Holloway not to appoint the citizen members. Bennett regretted that in Oklahoma the spirit of cooperation was missing, but he doggedly continued to sound the need for higher and public school educational articulation.<sup>38</sup>

Governor William Henry Murray, Holloway's successor, was also a Democrat, but by the Depression years was not a member of the progressive Democratic party wing.<sup>39</sup> Bennett and other advocates sold him the coordination notion from the standpoint of its economic benefits to the state. Through a new board Murray hoped to eliminate "unnecessary" duplication in the state college and university curricula. In the spring of 1933, he proclaimed an executive order proposing another coordination scheme to replace that of Holloway; this time it solicited the support of private higher institutions, as well.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Considerations Relating to the Coordination of Higher Education," *The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Special Collections, Box #2 (stillwater)*; Henry Garland Bennett, "Problems Confronting OU and A. & M.," *The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater)*.

<sup>38</sup>Henry G. Bennett and Schiller Scroggs, "The Junior College Idea in Oklahoma," *The Junior College Journal* 3 (November, 1932), p. 79; Louie Sanderson, Personal interview (February 21, 1979).

<sup>39</sup>H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, *Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History* (Norman, 1977) pp. 126-130.

<sup>40</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Considerations Relating to the Coordination of Higher Education."

Though the concept of involving all Oklahoma higher educational institutions was part of Bennett's dissertation, credit for selling Murray on the idea rested largely with an Oklahoma Catholic Bishop Francis C. Kelly. The bishop and other supporters feared the questionable legality of an executive order and therefore encouraged the Governor to press for state legislation establishing a new coordinating board. Bennett later criticized the resulting directorate because its blueprint deviated greatly from his ideal. Murray's board had no representatives from either the teachers' or junior colleges, though it did retain seats for non-educators. Just five of the state institutions' presidents were allowed to participate; four from private colleges and one (President W. B. Bizzell) from the University of Oklahoma. However, Oklahoma A. & M. had two members, Bennett and Schiller Scroggs, the college's Director of Research, a fact which documented Bennett's stature within the Murray administration, despite his disappointments.<sup>41</sup>

Dissimilar in other respects to Bennett's ideas, Murray's board also did not make great strides toward integrating courses of study between public schools and higher education. Nor did it propose replacement for the Oklahoma college governing board system. Primarily, the governor's efforts reflected both his fiscal conservatism and the state polity's

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.; Henry Garland Bennett and Schiller Scroggs, "The Beginning of Coordination in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, 1934), Vertical File, Special Collections" (Stillwater). For more about Bishop Kelly and the coordinating board see: Thomas Elton Brown, Bible Belt Catholicism: A History of the Roman Catholic Church in Oklahoma, 1905-1945, United States Historical Society Monograph Series Number Thirty-Three (New York, 1977), pp. 172-174.

Depression Era attitude which focused generally on economic accountability for state supported institutions, and less on academic improvements.<sup>42</sup>

Murray was a nineteenth-century populist and even an early progressive, turned reactionary in the 1930's. Though he and Bennett did share certain contentions, such as their disdain for big business as a destructive force on rural American, the college president criticized Murray in letters to Columbia associates.<sup>43</sup> Regardless of his feelings, Bennett had limited power when his own Oklahoma constituency backed a candidate for Governor, hence he had no choice but to appease the conservatism voiced by Murray's election.<sup>44</sup>

Rumors had persisted throughout the 1930 gubernatorial campaign that Bennett and other college presidents would be removed if Murray won.<sup>45</sup> After the election, the new Governor did have several college leaders replaced when they failed his spelling test. The list included many long and seldom used words, and if an "undesirable" college official

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<sup>42</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Considerations Relating to the Coordination of Higher Education."

<sup>43</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 241; Glen Roberson, "The Oklahoma Founding Fathers," Presented at Missouri Valley Historical Conference (Omaha, 1977). According to the latter source, Murray was a major author of the state constitution, a highly progressive document. However, New Deal Democrats and changing times catapulted the state's founding father into an ultra-conservative political source.

<sup>44</sup> Morgan & Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 126-130. These authors pointed out that even the state's Socialist party which was popular in the 1920's smacked of racism and cried for individual not government action. This phenomenon underscored the deep-seated conservatism in Oklahoma from which no political party escaped.

<sup>45</sup> Blackwell Sunday Tribune (April 5, 1931), p. 1.

ld not spell them all, Murray had an excuse to fire him.<sup>46</sup> Although retained Bennett, the state chief executive reappointed the Agricultural Board making it politically favorable to him, except for anti-Murray sident Harry Cordell, whom the people reelected in 1930.<sup>47</sup> The new rnor had little regard for colleges and universities, and even less academicians. Like many Americans, he blamed higher education for bringing permanent prosperity in the 1920's.<sup>48</sup> In 1931, Murray call- Oklahoma University and A. & M. College economic and commerce profes- a "damn bunch of theorists."<sup>49</sup> Even so, Murray made constant nds on Bennett's institution, such as requesting that the college ident release A. & M. engineers to plan the Lake Murray construc-

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Most of Murray's other practices embodied all the chicanery and lt of the Oklahoma decade which had preceded him. He favored an in- tax for the rich and relief for the poor, but his ill-tempered ways ad federal administrator Harry Hopkins to remove the New Deal's Fed- Emergency Relief Administration from Murray's control; Oklahoma was nly state in the Union to lose this right.<sup>51</sup> Though the Governor

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<sup>46</sup> Lysle Boren, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (July 14, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> The O'Collegian (January 13, 1931), pp. 1 & 3, "State Board of ulture Minutes" (February 5, 1931); Blackwell Morning Tribune ary 28, 1932), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1964), p.

<sup>49</sup> William Henry Murray, quoted in The O'Collegian (November 12, , p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Engineering School and Lake Murray, 1933-1934, Folder, Box #3, al Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>51</sup> Morgan and Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 122-130.

believed in taxation, whenever possible he refrained from spending revenues. He ordered fifteen to twenty percent expenditure cuts at A. & M. in 1931 and thirty percent in 1933. Furthermore, his Board of Agriculture compromised a tenure proposal Bennett had urged it to accept in 1929, firing many college personnel and suspending the sabbatical leave privilege. The agency also cut Bennett's salary to \$7,500 per year and enacted an expansive staff cut.<sup>52</sup> In 1933, Murray and the board attempted to remove black county extension agents who served black Oklahomans (an action which Bennett and Extension Director Trent convinced them to rescind).<sup>53</sup>

Governor Murray was no doubt alarmed by public allegations in 1932 that: Bennett was prodigally spending state money for Christmas cards, Cordell needlessly authorized the purchase of a heater and radio for Bennett's car, and both squandered money for an A. & M. business trip to Washington, D. C.<sup>54</sup> Added to these charges, some Oklahoma A. & M. students and their parents complained to the overseers that the Stadium Corporation (an alumni group dedicated to erecting a stadium and field

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<sup>52</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (August 17, 1928); Ibid. (January 4, 5, & 6, 1933); Ibid. (February 5, 1931); Ibid. (January 7, 1931); Ibid. (January 17, 18, & 19, 1933); Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address"; "Minutes of the College Council" (February 27, 1933), College Council Committee, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>53</sup>Dover P. Trent, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett," (October 14, 1932), Trent, Dover P.--Extension Division 1930-1944, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (October 6 & 7, 1932); Ibid. (October 14, 1932).

<sup>54</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (February 4 & 5, 1932).

house) had garnered student activity funds.<sup>55</sup> To keep an eye on Bennett, in 1933, the Murray board fired comptroller and Durant banker, Sam Stone, and appointed Republican Clint R. Strong as business manager, giving him the authority to fire any employee within the college.<sup>36</sup> Attesting to Bennett's charm, Stone soon became one of the college president's close friends.<sup>57</sup>

Murray also used the Oklahoma A. & M. campus as a breeding ground for his political ideologies and personal campaigns. While Governor, he set up shop in the office of T. H. Reynolds, Head of the History Department and called for faculty donations to his national presidential campaign. Moreover, Murray solicited A. & M. faculty and student signatures on petitions for his proposed State Constitutional amendments abolishing ad valorem and other taxes which were important sources of revenue for public school education.<sup>58</sup>

Publicly, Bennett sagaciously upheld Murray's administration, as evidenced by the college president's words at an Oklahoma A. & M.

Armistice Day celebration

From the ranks of the people drawn from the retirement of his farm has come William H. Murray, the sage of Tishomingo . . . Governor Murray has yielded to the demands of the hour that

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. (October 23, 1933); Ibid. (February 2, 3, & 4, 1933); Ibid. (March 10 & 11, 1933); Ibid. (March 23, 1933).

<sup>56</sup> Charles H. Lamb, "Clinton Riley Strong, I," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 30 (Spring, 1952), p. 250; Louie Sanderson, Personal Interview (February 21, 1979).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; Henry Garland Bennett, "Dr. Bennett's Oration at C. R. Strong Funeral, 1951," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>58</sup> The O'Collegian (October 10, 1931), p. 1. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions," p. 200.

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<sup>58</sup> The O'Collegian (October 10, 1931), p. 1. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions," p. 200.



a man of honor, of courage, . . . of vision and of power, sacrifice himself upon the altar of public duty.<sup>59</sup>

Coupled with his verbal praise, Bennett served as Executive Secretary for the William Henry Murray Educational Foundation, an Oklahoma A. & M. student loan fund.<sup>60</sup> In return for Bennett's services, Murray guaranteed that his gubernatorially appointed Oklahoma State Textbook Commission, would adopt works which Bennett and other Oklahoma A. & M. professors authored.<sup>61</sup> The commission did have one unappointed member, Vaughan, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who by being Bennett's close friend, insured the group's unanimity.<sup>62</sup>

Murray's one demand in exchange for the Textbook Commission's services was that Bennett and the others donate their royalties to the Murray Foundation.<sup>63</sup> Yet, Bennett never deposited any of his earnings with the trust, until a Tulsa County Grand Jury investigation brought the matter into focus in 1942. Even then, the financial records did not specifically state that contributions from Bennett's publisher, the American Publishing Company, were from the college president's books.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "The Increasing Middle Class," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>60</sup>State v. Henry G. Bennett et. al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), p. 751, Oklahoma State Library (Oklahoma City).

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 749-751.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 746.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 750.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 751; "Account of Capital Funds of William H. Murray Educational Foundation Inc." (May 31, 1948), Financial Aids Office (Stillwater). Contributions made from Bennett's publisher, the American Book Company, after the grand jury probe amounted to \$946.70.

Perhaps, Bennett believed the allegations that Murray was utilizing fund money to support his political campaign for the nation's presidency and refused to abet such aspirations.<sup>65</sup> However, Bennett's actions could have been a product of neglect, for the college president was a poor money manager. Rumors had always persisted that Durant and later Stillwater townspeople collected money to pay Bennett's bills.<sup>66</sup> Apparently, the educator was always "short" of personal funds, and he died leaving a very small estate except a life insurance policy which one of his children had purchased for him.<sup>67</sup>

#### Bennett Reshaped Oklahoma A. & M.

As President of Oklahoma A. & M., Bennett also refused to construct his professional goals in terms of fiscal limitations, and he was disinterested in administrative details of any sort. He hired men like Schiller Scroggs (later others took Scroggs' place) to do much of the research for his speeches, and Bennett brought to the college capable administrators to run the daily operations.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 242.

<sup>66</sup>T. H. Bingham and Mel A. Nash Personal interview, Edmond (July 27, 1979); Barbara Simank, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 2, 1979); Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview; The O'Collegian (July 30, 1928). p. 1. This last source reviewed a Durant Rotary farewell dinner for Bennett. One of the speakers laboriously referred to Bennett's unnamed "fault" but noted that the community loved him in spite of it. The person quite possibly could have been talking about Bennett's fiscal irresponsibility. Bennett's son Henry Jr. agreed that his father poorly managed personal affairs but said this practice did not extend into the A. & M. College business.

<sup>67</sup>Murl Rogers, Personal interview, Stillwater (July 26, 1979); Louie Sanderson, Personal interview, Stillwater (February 2, 1979).

<sup>68</sup>M. R. Lohmann, Personal interview, Stillwater (June 20, 1979); Raymond Girod, Personal interview.

By the mid-thirties, Bennett had successfully convinced the members of the Agriculture Board under Governors Holloway and Murray to hire his hand-picked cadre of extension, clerical, business and academic administrators. Dedication to Bennett's ideals was an important staff attribute, because financial remuneration was low at A. & M. when compared to other similar institutions throughout the country.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Bennett brought to Stillwater many "Durant Gang" members coupled with a few educators from other states.

Soon, the college Council of Deans, which governed the academic curriculum by initiating such changes as a Bachelor of Arts degree program in 1931, consisted primarily of Bennett appointments.<sup>70</sup> When, in 1928, the Board of Agriculture terminated Professor Blanch Freeman as the Dean of Women, Bennett nominated and the Board hired Southeastern State Teachers College faculty member and long-time personal friend, Julia Stout.<sup>71</sup> She stayed at A. & M. for twenty-three years, during which time she was responsible in part for the American Association of Universities' recognition of the college in the 1930's and the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) acceptance of Oklahoma A. & M. female graduates. Stout founded a state chapter of the Association of Women Students and paved the way for Mortar Board and a woman's athletic association on campus. Eventually, the dean received national recognition for her women's residence hall counseling system. She formulated her program after

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<sup>69</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Meeting the Competition," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>70</sup> "College Council Minutes" (May 11, 1931), Minutes of the College Council, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>71</sup> The O'Collegian (September 14, 1928), p. 1.

having made a nationwide study, probably encouraged by her graduate school mentors at Columbia Teachers College, where she took Master of Science and Master of Arts degrees.<sup>72</sup>

Stout's accomplishments won her a place in Who's Who of American Education, and she continuously held numerous administrative positions in various organizations for national dean of women. She chaired the AAUW's Fellowship Committee for years and summed up the Bennett-like moralistic intentions behind all her efforts as promoting, "the virtue of . . . higher . . . living."<sup>73</sup>

Bennett selected Schiller Scroggs, another of his Durant disciples, to head the School of Science and Literature. Scroggs had graduated from Southeastern while Bennett was president, and then he worked for his alma mater instructing courses on public school administration. However, in 1928, Bennett had some trouble vacating the A. & M. deanship for Scroggs. Clarence McElroy, the current Dean of Science and Literature, was firmly entrenched within the college bureaucracy. Not only was he Dean of Men and Head of the Bacteriology and Medicine Department, but McElroy had served as interim college president in 1928 before Bennett assumed the position. Therefore, Bennett hired Scroggs as A. & M.'s special researcher and immediately granted him sabbatical leave to complete both

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<sup>72</sup>Untitled piece, Dean Julia Stout 1928, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

a master's and doctor's degree from Columbia and Yale Universities, respectively.<sup>74</sup>

Bennett was not able to depose McElroy, but he did put him to work. In order to make substantive changes, the new college president needed to know of what the existing academic system consisted. Thus, Bennett charged McElroy with heading a campus-wide curricula survey, utilizing as a guide the United States Department of Land Grant Colleges Bureau of Education outline. The dean dutifully supervised the work of eighteen different committees appointed to administer the project.<sup>75</sup>

Returning to Oklahoma in the early 1930's as A. & M.'s Director of Administrative Research, Scroggs conducted all further campus, regional and national studies, collecting data on which Bennett based many of his tenure, sabbatical leaves and educational coordination policies. The two men even published research articles on these subjects in prestigious professional journals.<sup>76</sup>

In 1935, McElroy retained his secondary posts as Dean of Men and Head of the Bacteriology and Veterinary Medicine departments, but Scroggs

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<sup>74</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 228; "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (October 23, 1933). Although the board appointed McElroy vice-president, no documents ever referred to him in that capacity again. Bennett probably had no intention of sharing his chief executive role with a man who was not one of his special appointments.

<sup>75</sup>The O'Collegian (October 30, 1928), pp. 1 & 3.

<sup>76</sup>Henry G. Bennett and Schiller Scroggs, "Sabbatical Leave," Journal of Higher Education 3 (April, 1932), pp. 196-198. Henry G. Bennett and Schiller Scroggs, "The Junior College Idea in Oklahoma," pp. 75-80; Henry Garland Bennett, "Consideration Relating to the Co-ordination of Higher Education;" Schiller Scroggs and Henry Garland Bennett, "The Beginnings of Coordination in Oklahoma."

assumed leadership of the Science and Literature School.<sup>77</sup> Although Scroggs' personality destined him to eventual campus-wide unpopularity, colleagues respected his work, and the dean remained devoted to Bennett's objectives as seen in this memo to the college president:

you interpret current events, point out their significant factors, define . . . problems . . . , and advise . . . alternative courses of action. . . . Your speeches reveal not only discernment in stating the issues of the day but . . . that practical humaneness which is the key-note of your character.<sup>78</sup>

As in Scroggs' case, Bennett was not able immediately to oust Herbert Patterson and place Napoleon Conger (another Durant inner circle member and Columbia Teachers College doctorate) as Dean of Education. In 1929, Conger took a surrogate job as the Director of Student Personnel. Together, he and Scroggs made studies concerning uses of student fees at several universities. Together with college architect and professor Philip Wilber and Head of the Architectural Department, Donald A. Hamilton, Scroggs and Conger worked on special building projects designed to accommodate the developing progressive curriculum.<sup>79</sup> Dissatisfied with a Denver, Colorado architectural firm's blueprints for a Twenty-Five Year Building Plan, Bennett asked four men to remold it more to his liking.<sup>80</sup> The final blueprints placed the library in the center of

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<sup>77</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1935), p. vii.

<sup>78</sup> Schiller Scroggs, "Letter to Dr. Bennett" (July 1, 1933), Correspondence General, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry Garland Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>79</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 227-228.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 229; Otis Wile, "Brick, Stone, Dreams and Travail." Oklahoma A. & M. College Magazine 6 (January, 1956), pp. 6-9; "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (October 6 & 7, 1930). The Colorado firm was McCrary, Culley & Carnhart.

campus (where a Stillwater city street just happened to exist) and envisioned twenty-five new buildings and the enlargement of more than six others. The list included administration, dormitory, English, journalism, history, languages, home economics, engineering, veterinary science, agricultural engineering, poultry, horticulture, botany, mathematics, chemical engineering, aeronautics and education buildings, plus a field house, a women's gymnasium and an armory.<sup>81</sup> All of the structures set an architectural campus style which Bennett selected, resembling the Williamsburg, Virginia structures of red brick, white trim, slate roofs and dormer windows.<sup>82</sup>

Surrounded by talented and devoted Oklahoman's, Bennett replaced other key deanships with "outsiders." One such person, was Raymond D. Thomas, the new Dean of the School of Commerce, who held two doctorates from the University of Wisconsin. Thomas expressed his progressive convictions in a college magazine article, written shortly after he arrived in 1929. Rejecting the college curriculum which served only individual career needs, he wrote that institutions of higher learning must, "yield persons fit for citizenship responsibilities in the changing times."<sup>83</sup> Through research, he continued, land-grant education could extend itself, "beyond the confines of merely producing students."<sup>84</sup> Progressive social

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<sup>81</sup>Wile, "Brick, Stone, Dreams and Travail," pp. 7-9. "Oklahoma A. & M. of the Future," The A. & M. College Magazine 2 (November, 1930) pp. 80-81.

<sup>82</sup>Wile, "Brick, Stone, Dreams and Travail," p. 9.

<sup>83</sup>Raymond D. Thomas, "The Land-Grant College in the Changing Times." The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (January, 1930), pp. 3 & 10.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

change, "all but lies prostrate because of selfishness and social mismanagement," Thomas concluded.<sup>85</sup> Bennett was pleased with the dean's efforts to implement these concepts. In an institutional address, the college president commended the School of Commerce fact-gathering and analyzing programs which it conducted for various state boards and commissions.<sup>86</sup>

Phillip S. Donnell, Bennett's choice to head the School of Engineering, shared Thomas's commitment to service. Donnell's views brought him so close to Bennett that two decades later he became the college's first functioning vice-president.<sup>87</sup> A nationally known expert, Donnell received an invitation to the World Power Conference in 1930 and later obtained several administrative appointments to President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal agencies.<sup>88</sup>

Carl Petty Blackwell, a former National Fertilizer Association administrator was another important Bennett appointment. Making a place for him, the Agriculture Board "ousted" Carr T. Dowell, Dean of Agriculture and Director of the Experiment Station.<sup>89</sup> A campus coterie had advocated Dowell for A. & M.'s chief executive and former President

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Retrenchment and the College," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>87</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1949), p. 41.

<sup>88</sup> The O'Collegian (January 28, 1929), p. 1; Ibid.; (January 31, 1928), pp. 1 & 3; Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 227.

<sup>89</sup> C. T. Dowell, "Letter to President Bennett" (July 23, 1928), C. T. Dowell Dean of Agriculture 1917-1928, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater); Bradford Knapp 1925-1928, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).



Bradford Knapp considered him one of the best college administrators. Yet Dowell's state political stature was miniscule when compared to that of Bennett's.<sup>90</sup> In a letter to the new college president, Dowell asserted that despite his instinct to "avenge himself," he thought it best to, "take the bitter pill and go on."<sup>91</sup> Apparently other college administrators across the country shared Knapp's opinion of Dowell, because the former Oklahoma A. & M. dean soon accepted a position as the Louisiana State University Dean of Agriculture.<sup>92</sup>

It shortly became obvious why Bennett had secured Blackwell's talents for A. & M. Although the dean was an Oklahoma A. & M. graduate, he held master's and doctor's degrees from Wisconsin and Cornell universities, respectively. Soon, after he arrived, Blackwell helped Bennett secure \$80,000 worth of federal grant money owed A. & M. due to national legislation passed during the twenties. Moreover, Blackwell's central role in the New Deal program brought prosperity to the campus later in the thirties. Even before all the government monies were available, the Dean of Agriculture had almost doubled his division's size and had participated in international agricultural conferences which brought new recognition to the college.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The O'Collegian (June 5, 1928), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> C. T. Dowell, "Letter to President Bennett" (July 23, 1928).

<sup>92</sup> C. T. Dowell, "Letter to Randall Purdue" (July 18, 1928), C. T. Dowell, Dean of Agriculture 1917-1928, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 226-227; The O'Collegian (December 5, 1928), p. 1; Ibid. (December 14, 1928), p. 2; Ibid. (March 14, 1931), p. 1; "Sojourn-  
ing in Chile," The A. & M. College Magazine 2 (October, 1930), pp. 38-39.

Anticipating growth, Bennett's administration created the Graduate School in 1929 and hired D. C. McIntosh as dean. He held two undergraduate degrees, one in agricultural education, the other in chemistry and had a master's degree in educational administration followed by two doctorates, one in psychology and the other in administration. McIntosh remained with Bennett throughout the college president's tenure, instituting a doctoral program in the late 1930's, helping increase library facilities and pushing for high Graduate School standards.<sup>94</sup>

Several responsibilities of the college deans' involved extension work. Nora Talbott who held a master's degree from Columbia University (one of the only administrators Bennett did not move or replace) headed the School of Home Economics. She administered scores of home demonstration agents throughout many of Oklahoma's seventy-seven counties.<sup>95</sup>

Blackwell also oversaw county agents serving the state through many community responsibilities such as conducting 4-H Club achievement days for adults and home visits. He supervised Experiment Station work in half a dozen state locales,<sup>96</sup> and the director of Oklahoma A. & M. publications, Clement Trout, advertised their research efforts.<sup>97</sup> Acutely interested in expanding the extension programs, in the early thirties Bennett

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<sup>94</sup> D. C. McIntosh, "Needs for the Graduate School," The A. & M. College Magazine 2 (February, 1931), pp. 165, 168.

<sup>95</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1934), p. viii; Mumford, "The Land Grant College Movement," pp. 129-131.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 128; Gilmore, "A Historical Study," pp. 146-147.

<sup>97</sup> Oklahoma, Agricultural and Mechanical College Bulletin (Stillwater, 1934), p. iv.

encouraged the Agriculture Board to place agents in several counties which did not yet have them.<sup>98</sup>

Extension Director Trent, an Oklahoma A. & M. graduate and another employee whom Bennett retained, coordinated all the college's service work. The director worked with the deans and other college administrators such as Alvin L. Crable, Head of the School of Correspondence and a close Bennett associate.<sup>99</sup>

In 1934, Bennett filled another important role, naming Ico Iben, a Ph.D. holder from the University of Halle, Germany, as the new college librarian.<sup>100</sup> A search committee which Dean Thomas chaired greatly favored this successful builder of libraries and recommended a beginning salary of around \$3,000 per year to hire Iben away from the University of Illinois.<sup>101</sup>

Bennett also put together a special clerical and financial team. Sue MacNutt, a "Durant Gang" member and secretary to Bennett at Southeastern, assumed the same role at A. & M. MacNutt answered the president's mail, and in his absence, her speedy and cordial replies to both federal and state legislators made her quite valuable.<sup>102</sup> Receptionist

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid; The O'Collegian (March 31, 1935), p. 1. Crable even named his son, Henry Bennett.

<sup>100</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater).

<sup>101</sup> Raymond Thomas, "Letter to President Bennett" (May 7, 1934), Ico Iben 1934-1939, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>102</sup> "Letter from Sue Bryce McNutt, to Honorable Carl Deese, Member Oklahoma State Legislature" (January 30, 1937), Politics--1915, 1927, 1931, 1934, 1941, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater). This letter is one of numerous others.

Vita Ware and secretary Earle Albright also joined Bennett's office staff. Although these two had worked on campus before Bennett's arrival, he met with and approved both of them.<sup>103</sup> Albright's eventual dedication to Bennett was apparent in his criticism of columnist Eric Severied's pictorial characterization of the college president in 1951. "Doctor Bennett never wore a ruffled suit in his life," was Albright's retort.<sup>104</sup> Ware, who later took MacNutt's job when the latter retired, joined her co-workers' adulation for Bennett. Commenting on his capability to understand and maneuver people, she said, "he could look through a man's eyes and see a hat on the other side of his head."<sup>105</sup> Sanderson, a financial manager spoke for all of them when noting that he had never known anyone else besides Bennett, "who could work his staff to death and make them love it."<sup>106</sup> Even so, to some outside the president's office, the staff seemed almost frantic at times.<sup>107</sup>

Bennett relied heavily on his money managers to work out the details of his many elaborate and unrefined schemes. Although Bennett raised most of the college funds himself, they were always needed to formulate proposals and balance accounts. For instance, Bennett disobtained resotation funds for Old Central (the first of his building projects) without

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<sup>103</sup>Vita Ware Hudson, Personal interview, Pawnee (February 21, 1979).

<sup>104</sup>John Hamilton, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 13, 1979).

<sup>105</sup>Hudson, Personal interview.

<sup>106</sup>Sanderson, Personal interview.

<sup>107</sup>Lohmann, Personal interview.

much assistance from his finance specialists.<sup>108</sup> However, his next feat would require the expertise of an accounting genius.

With Holloway out of office by 1931, Bennett's fund-raising efforts lost an ally. Also, many Stillwater residents were certain that campus dormitories would deprive a living from every widow in town who boarded students.<sup>109</sup> Yet, the college president devised a plan convincing Governor Murray to work for student housing facility money. Bennett invited the Governor to Stillwater in 1932, and took his guest on a tour of the campus. The two stopped at one point near the corner of Monroe Street and University Avenue, and Bennett reminded the visitor of the need to house the influx of students brought on by the widespread unemployment. The president then added that the first one should be named for Murray. The aging chief executive, anxious to leave a legacy, went back to Oklahoma City and worked for a legislative appropriation to fund what became Murray Hall--address: Monroe and University.<sup>110</sup>

Bennett compiled seventy percent of the necessary funding to finance "Murray's" building through self-liquidating revenue bonds. This was an almost unique fiscal practice in the 1930's, for most American colleges and universities did not issue building bonds until the mid 1940's.<sup>111</sup> Though the plan which followed was Bennett's, business manager Strong and

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<sup>108</sup> Chapman, "Dr. Henry Bennett as I Knew Him," pp. 160-161; Geneviese Braley, "Classes Resumed in Old Central," The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (April, 1930), p. 5. Old Central was the college's first building and therefore had special significance to many alumni.

<sup>109</sup> Wile, "Brick, Stone, Dreams and Travail," p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> Sanderson, Personal interview; Jones, Personal interview.

<sup>111</sup> The Council of State Governments, Higher Education in the Forty-Eight States: A Report to the Governors' Conferences (Chicago, 1951), p. 145.

Sanderson worked out the details. The college president acquired the remaining thirty percent needed to pay for Murray Hall from New Deal public works monies. Yet, here lay only part of Bennett's strategem, for he subsequently sold additional bonds for the building and exchanged the new dollars with those from the federal government grant. Bennett finally had uncommitted money which established a substantial resource base to attract more matching funds for yet another dormitory--North Murray Hall. Federal auditors told Sanderson that Bennett's juggling act was unprecedented, but legal.<sup>112</sup>

Not only did Bennett's burgeoning physical plant draw attention to the A. & M. College, but a good intercollegiate sports program also aroused public enthusiasm for A. & M. When Bennett came to Stillwater, the Athletic Department was riddled with organizational and fiscal problems.<sup>113</sup> In 1929, one coach took a leave of absence, stating the improper budgeting and a lack of employment for athletes caused friction and dissent among players and coaches alike.<sup>114</sup> Advised by Vernon Snell, sports writer for the Oklahoma City Oklahoman and Times and other enthusiasts, Bennett hired, in 1934, a former Missouri and Colorado University basketball coach, Henry Iba.<sup>115</sup> In the spring of 1934, Iba became Athletic Director, and although Ed Gallagher had pioneered A. & M.'s excellent wrestling program, Iba and Bennett foresaw a department with competitive teams in all the major collegiate sports. The director built

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<sup>112</sup>Sanderson, Personal interview.

<sup>113</sup>Vernon Snell, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 9, 1979).

<sup>114</sup>The O'Collegian (May 21, 1929), p. 1; Ibid. (May 22, 1929), pp. 1 & 4.

<sup>115</sup>Henry Iba, Personal interview, Stillwater (September 9, 1979).

a staff around his own notion of combining loyalty and expertise. Almost all of the coaches were Oklahoma A. & M. graduates, who exuberantly supported the college in its Missouri Valley Conference.<sup>116</sup>

In another masterful diplomatic stroke Bennett used his potential nemesis, alumnus M. A. Melton, an old Bradford Knapp follower, to promulgate his innovations. Although Melton and other alumnus had not favored Bennett's candidacy, the new president bestowed them with importance in the college organization.<sup>117</sup> Together Bennett and the alumni group founded The A. & M. College Magazine. In the first issue the president invited all the former students and A. & M. supporters to Founders Day, a marvelous public relations event which was a celebration of the college's and Bennett's birthdays.<sup>118</sup>

The campus magazine also advertised Bennett's building programs and helped raise money for the Stadium Foundation.<sup>119</sup> In their efforts to erect a stadium and field house, the former students solicited the support of Oklahomans like Holloway, Vaughan, Oklahoman and Times owner, E. K. Gaylord, United States Senators W. B. Pine and Elmer Thomas, Federal Farm Board member Carl Williams and United States Secretary of War, Patrick J. Hurley (to whom the college gave an honorary degree in

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Rogers, Personal interview; Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 237.

<sup>118</sup> Rogers, Personal interview; Henry Garland Bennett, "A Message From the President," The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (September, 1929), p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 236-237.

1930).<sup>120</sup> Eventually, federal monies coupled with privately donated dollars funded a stadium. The A. & M. magazine also editorialized for a state college constitutional board of regents, which would minimize the state political influence over the college's governing structure. Oklahoma voted twice on the issue before it was finally passed in the early forties.<sup>121</sup>

The Alumni Association and Bennett recognized the student as central to the college mission, and therefore formed the Placement Bureau for graduating matriculants, which Columbia Teachers College master's degree holder, Archie O. Martin, headed.<sup>122</sup> Bennett also convinced former A. & M. students and other A. & M. college supporters to form student loan funds similar to the Lew Wentz and Murray Foundations.<sup>123</sup>

A. Frank Martin, Director of Student Employment, also worked tirelessly to help needy students finance themselves through grants, loans or individual employment.<sup>124</sup> One of Bennett's own brainstorms was the

<sup>120</sup> "What Every Oklahoman Should Know" (Stillwater, 1930), Stadium Campaign 1929-1930, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater); W. H. Molton, "A. & M.'s New Stadium," The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (January, 1930) p. 1; Ned Nyberg, "Hurley is Honored," The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (April, 1930), p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> Orville M. Savage, "What About This Separate Board of Regents?" The A. & M. College Magazine 2 (October, 1929), p. 18; "Legislature Backs Separate Board Plan," The A. & M. College Magazine 2 (September, 1930), pp. 6-7. Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 238.

<sup>122</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1936), p. vi.

<sup>123</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "How Shall Higher Education be Financed?" The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to Tom Anglin" (January 2, 1941), Bennett-Jobs-Politics-etc. 1934-1937, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>124</sup> The O'Collegian (May 20, 1939), p. 1.



Students Self Help Industries. Many worked for twenty cents per hour in one of the five different shops which produced cloth, brooms, rugs, furniture and ceramics, added to the Tiger Tavern, college farm and duplicating service.<sup>125</sup> These enterprises also generated college income from the sale of products and provided a laboratory for some classroom skills training. All totaled, Bennett's administration was able to assist many indigent students despite state politicians' consistent pressure to employ or aid constituents to whom they owed favors.<sup>126</sup>

The college's strides toward providing its students with utilitarian experience and financial remuneration prompted other institutions like Cameron A. & M. College to credit Bennett with being the most important spokesman and practitioner of vocational education in the state.<sup>127</sup> His renown surely helped A. & M. acquire the Oklahoma State Vocational Education Teacher Training Institute, formerly located in Oklahoma City.<sup>128</sup>

Bennett was additionally concerned about student deportment and was therefore troubled over charges that the Student Association leaders

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<sup>125</sup>Sanderson, Personal interview; Jones, Personal interview; "Student Industries are Enlarged," The A. & M. College Magazine 1 (July, 1930), p. 7; Robert E. Smith, "The Ceramics Factory at Oklahoma State University," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 50 (Summer, 1972), pp. 205-218.

<sup>126</sup>Jones, Personal interview; Sanderson, Personal interview; "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (April 24, 1929); Student Employment 1936, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater). This last and several other folders in a box on student employment and legislative correspondence contained hundreds of letters from state lawmakers pressuring Bennett to hire certain students and faculty.

<sup>127</sup>The O'Collegian (April 10, 1930), p. 1.

<sup>128</sup>"Memorandum of Agreement by and Between the State Department of Vocational Education and the Oklahoma A. & M. College Relative to State Supervision and Teacher Training in the Several Fields of Vocational Education," O.I.T.--Industrial Arts Education 1947-1953, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater).

stole money from the treasury. Ballot box stuffing during association elections and subsequent thefts by the winners prompted him to emphasize salubrity in his student body talks.<sup>129</sup> Even so, Bennett asserted that the best choices for a lifeswork were the ones which not only bettered the matriculant, but society as well.<sup>130</sup> In 1931, he remarked that

too many people allow themselves to be attracted by a vocation for superficial reasons; its monetary rewards, its social prestige, its tinsel and gilt. The achievement of character is after all, the aim and end of human life.<sup>131</sup>

Knowing that words were not enough, he continually instructed professors to prove that an A. & M. education was the source of material and aesthetic rewards.

The Depression had generated a tremendous irony for higher educators, Bennett told the faculty. Despite the loss of national and state public confidence in colleges and universities, many jobless people had decided to take college courses, which boosted enrollments at institutions like Oklahoma A. & M.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, Bennett advised instructors a chance to convince masses of students and the more than 250,000 people who yearly attended extension programs that higher education was the instrument of

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<sup>129</sup> "Letter to the Council of Deans from student association members," Student Senate--Knapp 1915-1928, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); The O'Collegian (May 17, 1932), p. 1; Ibid. (November 10, 1932), p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "Self-Selection for Higher Education," (Stillwater, 1932), Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry G. Bennett, "A Life Investment," Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid; Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Aims for 1931-1932," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

rogressive change.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, Bennett pledged to advertise his staff's accomplishments by publicly presenting them, "in terms of human necessities and wants."<sup>134</sup>

Bennett operated under the assumption that loyalty and "esprit 'corps" primarily resulted from making each individual feel he or she was essential to A. & M. The ambitious college president applied his understanding of people to keep his staff perpetually mobilized toward developing the college into an ideal land-grant service institution. By delegating a plethora of secondary administrative (not decision-making) responsibilities, Bennett gave the deans and his office staff a personal involvement in the college's progress. He generated primarily administrative loyalty by capitalizing on his inner circle of confidants. Bennett would invite a potentially new member in the informal club to a social affair. There the president's former Durant and newly acquired A. & M. close associates used such occasions to test newcomers, by revealing major college secrets or future plans to determine if he could keep silent.<sup>135</sup>

Nor did Bennett forget the faculty. Only two years after arriving at Stillwater, he devised a plan which provided an outlet for the academic staff's need for personal recognition and identification with the institution. He created a Decennium Club (of which Bennett was an automatic member) for all the academic employees who had served the college

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<sup>133</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Facts of Retrenchment," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>134</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Facts of Retrenchment."

<sup>135</sup> John Hamilton, Personal interview.

or at least ten years. The elite group socialized and prattled over college business, certainly making others long to participate.<sup>136</sup>

Bennett's relationship with college custodian C. A. Sharp illustrated the college president's technique of luring the staff into a position of wanting to please and be near him. Bennett initiated a gambit with Sharp, who was also a devout Baptist, by purposely misquoting biblical scriptures in conversations with the janitor. Sharp would rush home and check Bennett's references and the next day anxiously warn the college president that he was making the errors.<sup>137</sup>

By the mid-1930's Bennett had employed his cunning and charisma in dealing with not only the college workers, but with many Oklahoma residents, as well. The educator's usual mode of speaking whether at a Chautauqua or a sophisticated professional gathering, was to abandon his prepared address as soon as he sensed the crowd's mood. The orator then continued just conversing with his listeners, thereby appearing as a friendly stranger who had stopped for an afternoon chat.<sup>138</sup> Much to his credit, his reasoning consistently spurned the familiar "scapegoating or trigger-baiting" of the populist-like southern demagogue, such as Murray.<sup>139</sup> Though Bennett continued to identify the source of both Oklahoma's and the nation's problems, he always explained how his

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<sup>136</sup> A. & M. College Decennium Club Rules and Regulations" (June 1, 1942), Decennium Club, Secretary--Treasurer's Records 1930-1949, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>137</sup> Barnes, Personal interview.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.; Jones, Personal interview; Lohmann, Personal interview.

<sup>139</sup> W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York, 1941), p. 219.

institution and higher education in general could change people's lives and relieve their suffering.<sup>140</sup>

Bennett's combined efforts to win backing from Oklahoma citizens, educators and politicians spawned what some referred to as the "school bloc." It comprised a cadre of highly placed state educationists and politicians who looked to Bennett for guidance and counsel.<sup>141</sup> His considerable power was a result of not only his personal popularity, but of the fruitful encounters with either current or potentially leading Oklahomans. By the mid-thirties, Bennett had supervised at Southeastern State Teachers college and Oklahoma A. & M., the tutelage of almost all the state's higher educational presidents and other administrators, except for the University of Oklahoma's chief executives.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, he had made friends with countless members of the Rotary International, the Baptist Convention, and numerous other civic organizations.

Thus, Bennett discovered that building a fortress for his progressive higher education ideals required the practical necessity of compromising with and even pandering to the many people who in some manner controlled the flow of resources or the expediency and effectiveness with

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<sup>140</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "An Economic Basis for American Individualism," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>141</sup> Carl J. Bloomfield, "Letter to Bishop Kelly," (September 22, 1937), Miscellaneous B, Folder, General Correspondence for 1936-1937, Archives of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (Oklahoma City). Other citations for the "school bloc" appear in the following chapters.

<sup>142</sup> Bishop Kelly "Letter to Governor William H. Murray" (November 8, 1933), Education--Oklahoma Plan, Folder, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, Archives of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (Oklahoma City).

which they were used. Bennett could play the pragmatic game of politics when needed. Yet, he could become the ministerial spell-binder who convinced his flock that A. & M. was the harbinger of democracy in Oklahoma.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEW DEAL: A TWO-EDGED SWORD, 1934-1945

"The whole structure and philosophy of higher education should be aimed not at fitting individuals to make a living but at making society fit to live [in]," Bennett intoned as he labored to keep alive progressive ideas of the land-grant college mission throughout Depression years.<sup>1</sup> Yet, he desperately needed money to breathe life into the visions. Federal laws designed to bolster land-grant education since the 1897 Hatch Experiment Station and the 1890 Morrill acts, were available to A. & M. However, state governments were often required to match these dollars before its citizens could receive any allotment. Hence, a parsimonious Oklahoma Legislature which cut higher education funds under Governor Murray could have crippled Oklahoma A. & M.<sup>2</sup>

#### An Innovator Succeeded Governor Murray

At last in 1935, Governor E. W. Marland, a former United States Congressman from Oklahoma, worked with Bennett to obtain plentiful dollars from state and national sources. The two men encouraged Bennett's key administrators either to take leaves of absence or to remain on A. & M.'s

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Some Implications of the Coordination of Higher Education," Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>2</sup>For reference to twentieth-century federal legislation see Chapter III, pages 59-60, especially footnote number 17 on page 60.

payroll while accepting jobs with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration. Even Bennett himself served or chaired several federal or state government programs. Not only did the Roosevelt executive branch administer all the existing laws to aid higher education, but the President actuated new legislation which added more agencies and subsequent public services under his executive control, such as the United States Works Progress and Federal Relief administrations (WPA and FRA).

With both a sympathetic national President and Governor Bennett multiplied the existing progressive A. & M. curricular offerings. Moreover, the college president was even able to work successfully for a time with Marland's successor, conservative Democrat Leon "Red" Phillips. In addition, Bennett expanded A. & M. faculty's privileges, sabbatical leave and job security, but he doggedly clung to a solitary reign over internal college governance.

Bennett's command of a vital educational institution, and his predominant role in state and federally sponsored relief measures began stirring concern among conservative Oklahomans, despite the fact that he remained philosophically a progressive. During the early forties many of his opponents tried to expose him as a powerful and corrupt machine boss whose domination over the "school bloc" was a threat to state citizen's freedom to direct their own educational institutions and choose their own political leaders.

In 1935, many Oklahomans had temporarily abandoned their conservative beliefs and voted for Marland who promised to bring the New Deal to Oklahoma, largely because the state had collapsed economically. Drought created the hot dry winds which became cyclonic dust storms and blacked out the sun. Despite Oklahoma's faith in rugged individualism, the



people just could not bear up under continuous economic pressure without federal financial aid.<sup>3</sup>

Bennett originally, but quietly, supported Marland's Democratic primary opponent and fellow southeastern Oklahoman, Tom Anglin. If elected, Anglin privately promised to place Bennett as President of the University of Oklahoma, thereby blanketing Bennett's influence over all the state's higher educational institutions. Yet, forever the realist, Bennett quickly came to Governor Marland's side after the election. In speeches, he lavishly praised the Marland Institute, an educational and recreational center in Ponca City, Oklahoma, the goal of which was to foster businessmen's community activity. Furthermore, the college president lauded Marland's high ethical standards while in the nation's Congress, in one public address explaining that Marland had sponsored a committee which

startle[d] the country by its revelations of . . . the money lords' . . . greed [which has] been snapping up the economic independence of this nation and making Wall Street the Anti-Christ of democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing, Bennett further wedded his own and Marland's political philosophies by instructing Oklahomans on how to combat the ultra-rich. Instead of glorifying them, "and legalizing the status quo, we should use technology to form an equitable and stable society," Bennett said. Oklahomans' unwillingness to accept this old progressive challenge was the state's "great abdication," he concluded.<sup>5</sup>

Though Marland the moralist campaigned on a platform of wrenching

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<sup>3</sup> H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (Norman, 1977), pp. 130-131.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Introducing Governor Marland."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

economic power from the affluent few in the name of the people, while Governor of Oklahoma he set out to reward his friends and punish his foes. He admittedly dispensed jobs and favors to pro New Deal people.<sup>6</sup> Howard "Pete" Drake, the Governor's patronage dispenser spent over \$25,000 in bribes to depose conservative Democrat Red Phillips and install Representative E. T. Daniels as Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representative.<sup>7</sup> The Governor also positioned several of Bennett's professional friends in key state offices. In 1936, when Agriculture Board President Harry Cordell died, Marland appointed Joe Scott, a Bennett protégé, as the new board leader.<sup>8</sup> Also, when State Superintendent Vaughan became President of Northeastern State Teachers College at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the Governor then assigned Correspondence School Director of Oklahoma A. & M., A. L. Crable, to Vaughan's former position.<sup>9</sup> Bennett replaced Crable with a "Durant Gang" favorite and Ouachita Baptist College graduate, Roy R. Tompkins, changing his title to Director of the Division of Extension. Marland even brought Bennett into the Oklahoma chief executive's intimate group of advisors by making him chairman of the Oklahoma State Planning and Resources Board, an agency which coordinated and

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<sup>6</sup>The O'Collegian (December 1, 1936), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. (January 14, 1937), p. 1; State v. Henry G. Bennett et. al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), p. 723, Oklahoma State Library (Oklahoma City).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 746.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.; Auguie Henry, "Letter to H. G. Bennett" (August 25, 1936) Politics--1915, 1927, 1931, 1934, 1937, 1941, 1948, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater). The latter source indicated that Bennett was not the only person who was happy over Crable's state position. Others like Auguie Henry, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Bartlesville, wrote Bennett that he was "rejoicing" over Mr. Crable's appointment as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

projected Oklahoma's socio-economic growth in agriculture and industry.<sup>10</sup> Also, by not reappointing members, Marland successfully eliminated the Murray administration's higher educational coordinating board, an organization which Bennett had criticized for its deviations from his ideal.<sup>11</sup>

Together, Marland, Scott and Bennett funneled over one-half of the state's New Deal dollars directly into Oklahoma A. & M.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the Legislature generously appropriated money to augment matching federal grants, due in part to the Oklahoma State Senate Committee on Education's report favoring building funds to A. & M.<sup>13</sup> and the state Fire Marshall's condemnation of the English-History and Music-Arts buildings.<sup>14</sup> All

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<sup>10</sup>The O'Collegian (June 4, 1942), p. 1; Morgan & Morgan, Oklahoma, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup>Stanley W. Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions of Higher Education in Oklahoma" (Unpub. Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1971), p. 201.

<sup>12</sup>Philip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University--Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1977), p. 252. The following citations indicated that although Bennett was successful in gaining matching federal funds for many projects, the national government did reject some of his proposals such as a student union, library and a new president's home costing over \$40,000. Also, Bennett charged that the Federal Writers' Guild pamphlet, entitled Oklahoma Guide, unfairly portrayed Oklahoma A. & M. as a highly politicized institution: P.W.A. 1234 Library Amendatory Application K38, Folder and P.W.A. 1234 Library Original 1934-1948, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater); P.W.A. Okla. 1379 Student Union Building 1938-1939, Folder and P.W.A. Okla. 1420 Residence for President 1938-1939, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to William Cunningham, State Director Federal Writer's Project," Works Progress Administration Projects 1934-1938, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>13</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address, 1937," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater): "Report of Legislative Committee of Inspection, Oklahoma A. & M. College," Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater). The O'Collegian (November 21, 1936), pp. 1 & 4.

<sup>14</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (March 22, 1937); Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address, 1937."

totaled, the 1936-1937 legislative session awarded the college over two million dollars in a biennial appropriation, doubling the record set during the 1928-1929 session.<sup>15</sup>

Bennett undauntedly initiated gambits which helped bring about copious state building funds. To emphasize the need for a new field house, the college president purposely postponed serving dinner to a group of state lawmakers who were scheduled to attend a basketball game. As a result, they were among the last spectators seated in the old field house. Later, their sore stiff backs served as painful reminders of the over-crowded conditions.<sup>16</sup> Further mobilizing state support, Bennett conducted another public relations maneuver during the 1936-37 state legislative session. To accommodate a group of 4-H youngsters who converged on the campus for their annual meeting, the president had a huge tent erected, which blew over during the group's activities. No one was hurt, but the incident provided added enthusiasm for what became Gallagher Hall, a stadium and activities building. During the budget hearings for the biennial session, Bennett addressed his fellow public servants, asking rhetorically if they wanted their children to meet in inadequate facilities. "No," was their reply, and they had Gallagher Hall built to prove it.<sup>17</sup>

The Marland administration further involved Oklahoma A. & M. in special state projects apart from the specific college extension functions

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Henry Iba, Personal interview, Stillwater (September 11, 1979).

<sup>17</sup>Weldon Barnes, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 14, 1979), 4-H Club Activity Building, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

or the new roles brought on by federal agency affiliations. For example, the state commissioned A. & M. to construct a model prison at Stringtown, Oklahoma, one that stressed rehabilitation over punishment.<sup>18</sup>

An excellent staff was essential to handle all of the new responsibilities of the college, and having a good business manager was no exception. However, the Marland appointed Agriculture Board did not retain (Clint Strong) probably because he was a Republican). Instead, the Governor appointed a new man who did not last long, leaving an assistant, Lewie Sanderson, who for all practical purposes became the college's chief financial expert.<sup>19</sup>

Carl Blackwell was also crucially important to Bennett during the New Deal Era. Like seventy other college employees, Blackwell held administrative positions with the federal and state government. In 1935, Blackwell took a leave of absence to assume the United States Southwestern Division directorship of the Federal Land Utilization program located in Fort Worth, Texas.<sup>20</sup> Though Lippert Ellis, assistant Dean of Agriculture, took over many of his campus responsibilities, Blackwell remained dedicated to A. & M., alerting Bennett to available programs and helping him secure New Deal money.<sup>21</sup>

Blackwell died in 1936, but his significant efforts lived on when in the late thirties the college acquired the Lake Carl Blackwell area,

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<sup>18</sup>The O'Collegian (June 4, 1937), pp. 1 & 3; Ibid. (June 3, 1938), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (June 4, 1935); Louis Sanderson, Personal interview (February 21, 1979).

<sup>20</sup>Clement E. Trout, "A. and M. College Does it's Part," The A. & M. College Magazine 5 (October, 1933), pp. 5, 15-16; "Federal Government Continues to Call on A. and M.," The A. & M. College Magazine 5 (February, 1934), p. 5, 13.

a 21,000 acre allotment obtained through the United States Department of Agriculture's cooperative land use program.<sup>22</sup> The new water source provided much needed relief to the drought-stricken college campus, and it facilitated pasture, grazing, recreation, wildlife, forestry and soil experiments.<sup>23</sup> In 1936, federal matching funds also helped pay for wells dug at the Perkins Oklahoma College farm, an area just a few miles south of Stillwater.<sup>24</sup> Bennett subsequently sold college water from the new copious supplies to the city of Stillwater.<sup>25</sup> The parched citizens were quite grateful to the college; thus, Bennett ingratiated himself with the city and simultaneously quelled many of the townspeople's opposition to A. & M.'s student housing facilities.<sup>26</sup>

Administered by Lippert and later in 1939 by Blackwell's permanent replacement, Warren L. Blizzard, the experiment stations took advantage

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<sup>21</sup>Bulletin: Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1936), p. x. Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 248.

<sup>22</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (February 8 & 9, 1937); Henry Garland Bennett, "Tribute to Carl Petty Blackwell," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>23</sup>Lake Carl Blackwell Project 1938-1947, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); Lake Carl Blackwell--Water Supplies 1938-1940, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>24</sup>Francis Richard Gilmore, "A Historical Study of the Oklahoma Agriculture Experiment Station (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1967), pp. 169-170.

<sup>25</sup>Water Situation 1936, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater); "Works Progress Administration Projects 1934-1938, Folder, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater); "State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (December 21, 23, 28, & 30, 1936).

<sup>26</sup>Phil Bennett, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (June 17, 1979); Water Situation 1936, Folder; The O'Collegian (March 15, 1940), p. 1.

of other federal acts.<sup>27</sup> The Bankhead Jones Act (1935) funded new research in economics and rural sociology, unearthing the serious socioeconomic inequality in Oklahoma. Some of the resulting college publications were A Socio-Economic Atlas of Oklahoma, The Theory and Consequences of Mobility of Farm Populations and Legal Aspects of Landlord Tenant Relationships in Oklahoma.<sup>28</sup>

A more direct effort to alleviate farmers' financial problems was the college administered federal debt adjustment program which provided money to agrarians in all Oklahoma counties.<sup>29</sup> Finally in 1936, Bennett successfully acquired National Youth Administration (NYA) college grant money for many drought-stricken family youngsters wishing to attend Oklahoma A. & M.<sup>30</sup>

Other dilemmas for farmers originated from unwise cultivation methods which wore out the earth and created sand-like top soil. High winds easily sucked dirt into the sky, resulting in an Oklahoma Dust Bowl. The Experiment Station investigated better methods of wheat and cotton farming,<sup>31</sup> and the Oklahoma State Soil Conservation Service, an agent of the United States Department of Agriculture was a major research contributor. Bennett chaired the state agency and the A. & M. College's

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<sup>27</sup> Ferdie Deering, Personal interview (August 27, 1979); Bulletin: Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1936),

<sup>28</sup> Gilmore, "A Historical Study," pp. 157-165.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> F.E.R.A. and N.L.A. Students 1934-1935, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); National Youth Administration 1935-1938, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>31</sup> Gilmore, "A Historical Study," pp. 166-169.

Director of Extension, Dean of Agriculture and Oklahoma State Director of Vocational Agriculture Education served under him.<sup>32</sup> The service's supervisors, located in each of fifty-eight Oklahoma districts, mapped the various soil types and suggested optimum agrarian practices for each.<sup>33</sup> The task was not simple, because the state had nineteen different soils and growing seasons ranging from 180 to 240 days.<sup>34</sup>

Additional A. & M. administrators greatly contributed to the college extension efforts in the later thirties and early forties. While on leave, Raymond Thomas became an Oklahoma State Tax Commission member and a consulting economist for the United States Tennessee Valley Authority. In 1935, Dover Trent left A. & M. and took a position as Assistant Director of the Commodities Division of the United States Agricultural Adjustment Administration and was Regional Director of the Federal Resettlement Bureau. In 1936, Ernest E. Schole, a Texas A. & M. College graduate, replaced Trent as Oklahoma A. & M.'s Extension Director, in addition to directing campus New Deal innovations.<sup>35</sup> Bennett, Trent, and then Schole also administered an on campus extension federal project, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the purpose of which was to man state reforestation and soil erosion projects. At least 200 men staffed the project,

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<sup>32</sup> The O'Collegian (November 17, 1942), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Gilmore, "A Historical Study," pp. 166-167.

<sup>34</sup> Organization for European Economic Cooperation, Agricultural Extension Services in the USA (Paris, 1951), pp. 157-158, 163.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Land Grant College: A Federal College in a State Setting" The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1936), p. vii; Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 248.



and many attended the college through a special curriculum which the College Council formulated for them.<sup>36</sup>

E. T. Donnell's Engineering School blazed new extension service trails when, in 1936, state lawmakers voted money to fund the Engineering Experiment Station at Eagles Nest, New Mexico. The trial agency was successful but only received funding through 1939.<sup>37</sup> During the Depression, Donnell also participated extensively in federally funded off and on campus service work. He served as the state's engineer for the regional WPA office located in Oklahoma City. Together with college architect Philip Wilber, he oversaw construction of streets, gutters, sidewalks, heating tunnels, steam and water distribution systems, added to cafeteria and auditorium additions constructed by federally paid employees. Other physical plant changes which WPA workers effected were the razing of the Music-Arts and English-History buildings, coupled with the Whitehurst and Morrill Hall renovations. They also built housing for animal husbandry, poultry, greenhouse, Oklahoma State Vocational Education Office, agricultural engineering, classroom, student housing (Willard and Cordell) chemical engineering and 4-H Club field house accommodations.<sup>38</sup>

Under Bennett, the college curriculum mirrored New Deal pragmatism.<sup>39</sup> In 1935, he initiated another evaluation of the college courses and

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<sup>36</sup>"C.C.C. Camp Located at Oklahoma A. & M. College," C.C.C. Barracks 1936, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>37</sup>Student Self Help Industries 1930-1932, Folder, Box #9, Special Collections (Stillwater); Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 248.

<sup>38</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "The Land Grant College;" Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address, 1937."

<sup>39</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Problems in Appraising and Improving College Education" (Stillwater, 1934), Special Collection (Stillwater).

campus governance similar to those conducted at Purdue, Chicago, Michigan and Minnesota Universities. At least fifty Oklahoma A. & M. faculty members participated in several committees, each charged with an aspect of the project.<sup>40</sup> A somewhat critical 1934 North Central Association report possibly prompted the college assessment. It expressed three reservations concerning low, graduate, school standards, the lack of faculty doctorates and the granting of a physical education degree. However, the association accredited A. & M. in 1935, after Dean McIntosh raised the graduate school's entrance requirements, the college dropped a physical education degree program, and Bennett assured North Central that many of his faculty were working toward a doctorate.<sup>41</sup>

With accreditation behind him Bennett launched the appraisal. The College Council recommended adoption of many of the faculty suggestions such as the Committee on Student Advisement's comprehensive counseling system which took data from each new student and his former high school to determine for him the optimum career choice. Subsequently, the student evaluated his college experience in terms of the new-found goals. After studying some of these responses the committee also supported Bennett's theory that successful A. & M. programs should implement the

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<sup>40</sup>"The General Faculty Committee on the Appraisal and Improvement of Higher Education 1934-1936," Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>41</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to Dr. George A. Works, Secretary of North Central Association of College and Schools," North Central Association 1934-1949, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

progressive notion of the land-grant college and give each student a practical education, which also fulfilled societal needs.<sup>42</sup>

Other faculty groups, which investigated general education courses, stressed that the purpose of such courses was to engender within the student a commitment of personal and social responsibility. The professors criticized the survey classes for being riddled with detail and devoid of interdisciplinary content.<sup>43</sup> To remedy the problem, the social studies committee formulated new areas of study such as western culture and contemporary problems, which reflected higher education's first survey courses founded by John Dewey twenty-five years earlier.<sup>44</sup>

A statewide conference at A. & M. in 1938 evidenced the college's interest in utilitarian general education. Bennett presided and shared the speaker's platform with other educators like State Superintendent Crable and Director of the Teacher Education Project of the American Council on Education Karl Bigelow. Here, and on other occasions, Bennett endorsed the progressive ideal of a democratized form of the old liberal

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<sup>42</sup>"The Report of the Committee on Student Advisement" (April 17, 1936), "The General Faculty Committee on the Appraisal and Improvement of Higher Education 1934-1936, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); "Progress Report of the Faculty Committee on Appraising and Improving College Education" (Stillwater, 1934), Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater), p. 31; Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School; Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1961), p. 161.

<sup>43</sup>"Report of the Committee on Curriculum Reorganization for the School of Science and Literature," The General Faculty Committee on the Appraisal and Improvement of Higher Education 1934-1936, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>44</sup>Committee on Social Studies, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (February 18, 1936), The General Faculty Committee on the Appraisal and Improvement of Higher Education 1934-1936, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

arts training as necessary to the land-grant college curricula.<sup>45</sup> In fact, he stressed at A. & M. a combination of both general and vocational education. Once quoting Columbia President Nicholas Murray Butler, Bennett restated that the

intertwining of scholarship and . . . service is an essential part of the true university. . . . The day when the scholar might pass his time on the mountain top in a remote unpopulated section of his country is gone forever. . . . [His] place . . . is where men are. It is men, and the needs of men that will best stimulate his thought and furnish it with high objective.<sup>46</sup>

Even so, Bennett once told an audience of traditional college educators that the small liberal arts college should continue as a training center for many American leaders. "Democracy is incapable of its own leadership . . . [and] must depend upon the aristocracy of the intellect and soul," he said.<sup>47</sup> Yet, he also encouraged the educators to accept and teach scientific knowledge which through industrialization could be of great benefit to mankind.<sup>48</sup>

As the state became more industrialized, Bennett was concerned that

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<sup>45</sup>"Conference on General Education," The General Faculty Committee on the Appraisal and Improvement of Higher Education 1934-1936, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); Cremin, The Transformation of the School, p. 161.

<sup>46</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "The Land Grant College."

<sup>47</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Education for Eternal Values in a Changing World," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater). Undoubtedly responding to Bennett's elitism and ambition, his sons all attended prestigious colleges for their post undergraduate professional training. Henry Jr. graduated from Johns Hopkins at Harvard Law School. Phil even studied under Felix Frankfurter, just prior to the latter's United States Supreme Court appointment in 1937. The reference for this material was: Phil Bennett, Personal interview.

<sup>48</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Education for Eternal Values."

business people had largely shunned participation in college activities and programs.<sup>49</sup> He consistently instructed Oklahomans that the specific purpose of the land grant college was not only to provide agricultural expertise, general education and military training but also to promote other technological and professional programs. Where he had stressed to farmers that science was only their enemy when it was unharnessed, he now told audiences that industry and agriculture must work together for social and economic progress. Bennett explained that

while we are working for the conservation of the soil, . . . water and land . . . to produce the agricultural needs of the world, at the same time we should build industries to process the farm products which we produce.<sup>50</sup>

The college president was also excited about potentials for production of untapped raw materials in the state. At a vocational rehabilitation conference in 1939, he proudly enumerated Oklahoma's resources for zinc, glass, wheat, clay, cotton and natural gas development.<sup>51</sup> On other occasions he expressed hope that Oklahomans would safe-guard democratic opportunities by supporting secondary services and other prospective training programs designed to regulate and direct industry.<sup>52</sup>

Specific on-campus school and division alternations mirrored the wedding of Bennett's concept of general and vocational education. In

<sup>49</sup> Gilmore, "A Historical Study," p. 163.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "A Balance Between Agricultural and Industrial Development," Speech File, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>51</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "The Oklahoma A. & M. College Faces the Future," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>52</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Present Trends in Higher Education," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

1935, the president placed Schiller Scroggs as Dean of the School of Science and Literature, which became the School of Arts and Sciences in 1937.<sup>53</sup> Scroggs made changes similar to, but more expansive than, those initiated at Southeastern State Teachers College. By the early forties, prelaw, medical, dental, and nursing courses added to Departments of Art, Economics, Government, Public Affairs, Psychology, Rural Sociology, Laboratory Technology, Technical Journalism and Military Science were available.<sup>54</sup>

In 1935, Herbert Patterson took sabbatical leave. When he returned the following year his new position was Dean of Administration, and Napoleon Conger was the new Dean of Education.<sup>55</sup> Almost immediately, Conger reorganized the school, forming Elementary, Secondary, and Religion Education, Educational Administration and Educational Psychology, and Philosophy Departments. One of the dean's special offerings was to isolate and specially train handicapped or otherwise deficient students. Through his State Department contacts (probably Crable), Conger secured the latest equipment to help foster his aims.<sup>56</sup>

Both Dean Blizzard's Agriculture Division and Dean McIntosh's Graduate School moved forward with new social, scientific and professional courses covering agronomy, plant pathology, dairying, rural life and

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<sup>53</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (June 4, 1935).

<sup>54</sup>Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1942), p. v.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. (Stillwater, 1935), p. vii; Ibid. (Stillwater, 1936) p. viv.

<sup>56</sup>E. L. Stromberg, "Progress in Education," The A. & M. College Magazine 9 (February, 1938), p. 3.

agricultural journalism.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, McIntosh broadened the master's degree curriculum offerings, and in 1939, the College Council authorized a doctoral program in education.<sup>58</sup>

The Divisions of Commerce, Engineering and Home Economics also developed outstanding vocational opportunities. Accounting, Banking, Finance, Geography and Public Administration highlighted a score of new Commerce Departments in addition to a separate School of Intensive Business Training. The New Division of Engineering under Dean Donnell had three schools: Architecture, Applied Art, and Engineering-Technical Training. Bennett's keen interest in preparing people to work with burgeoning Oklahoma industry evolved into Engineering's Petroleum Industrial Training Department.<sup>59</sup> Donnell also supervised the Technical Training School's Firemanship Training Program and building, funded partially with federal dollars and constructed on land which was donated by the city of Stillwater.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Nora Talbot's Home Economics Division now offered new and revised research courses in home economics and formulated new ones in hotel administration.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1942), pp. iv-v.

<sup>58</sup> "College Council Minutes" (February 22, 1938); College Council Meeting, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater), Graduate School--Office of the Dean 1946-1953, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>59</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1942), pp. v-vi.

<sup>60</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Address before the State Fireman's Association Meeting, 1939," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>61</sup> Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1942), p. xi.

Despite the faculty's dedication to both New Deal and Bennett utilitarianism, the college president dogmatically held on to his exclusive right to govern. One 1935 evaluation committee had complained about the lack of faculty participation in decision-making. The College Council considered the problem and suggested that as a beginning, Bennett nominate a faculty committee to formulate a more specific tenure policy. The faculty committees also recommended that the College Council be expanded into a senate with elected professional and administrative representatives. According to the committee, through this body, each department could approve its own new appointments and otherwise provide a vehicle through which instructional and research staff members could organize to further their own interests.<sup>62</sup>

In a formal response to an American Association of University Professors (AAUP) research study inquiry, Bennett confessed that he had rejected the faculty suggestions. The College Council never expanded, nor were instructors ever officially consulted on budgetary matters. In addition, the deans maintained a commanding role in each school or division, and Bennett's word was final, especially when the Agriculture Board was compliant.<sup>63</sup>

For Bennett, improved faculty credentials were important because they enhanced A. & M.'s national standing. He pressed professors to think of the college instead of themselves. Oklahoma A. & M. had much to achieve, the educators lamented, before it could ever be favorably

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<sup>62</sup>"Progress Report of the Faculty Committee on Appraising and Improving College Education," pp. 3-23, 31-32.

<sup>63</sup>"A.A.U.P. College and University Government Survey," Report of Association of American University Professors 1939, Folder, Box #8, Special Collections (Stillwater).



compared to Purdue University or Iowa, Oregon, Michigan, and Texas A. & M. colleges.<sup>64</sup> Yet, he motivated the faculty, by illustrating that each professor's personal accomplishments pushed A. & M. toward becoming a nationally recognized land-grant college, and augmented the professor's own job security.<sup>65</sup> In a 1937 campus address, Bennett noted that his retention of many faculty members was creating a type of tenure. Thirty-seven percent of the faculty of 1936, compared to ten percent of the 1928 faculty, had been at A. & M. more than five years, while there were fifteen percent more doctorates. Furthermore, he continued, the number of staff members had increased, while many received promotions, leave time and retirement benefits as a result of a new Agriculture Board policy which Bennett had advanced.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the faculty qualifications and curricular and physical plant developments, a perpetual influx of students remained the essential element to college growth. Yet, hundreds of enrolled or potential students were in desperate need of financial assistance. By the mid-thirties hard times had hit Bennett's Student Self-Help Industries, and the college gradually liquidated each one, making mandatory other forms of student aid

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<sup>64</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Five Objectives for Oklahoma A. & M. College," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater). Authoritarianism was not uncommon to many progressive leaders, such as Bennett's favorite, Woodrow Wilson. As Arthur S. Link pointed out in Wilson: The Road to the White House, Wilson used a New Jersey political machine to become the state's governor in 1908. Yet, when elected, he purged the old party hacks from power and replaced them with his own people.

<sup>65</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Faculty Address, 1937."

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

or employment.<sup>67</sup> Thus, added to the drought-stricken student assistance, NYA officials funded students through a new Oklahoma A. & M. twelve state area vocational training program, offering agriculture, welding, mechanics, plumbing, carpentering, drafting, and general education.<sup>68</sup> Bennett also obtained NYA and WPA employment and scholarship money for A. & M. athletes, while Director of Student Employment Martin kept hiring matriculant campus labor.<sup>69</sup> More spectacularly, Martin sponsored the college entertainers made up of the several different acts which toured the state. The young show people made money and gained recognition for themselves and Oklahoma A. & M. Many times a group of singers performed either before or after Bennett spoke on state-wide radio broadcasts. The most famous ensemble was the Cowboy Quartet which in 1939 placed second in New York City's Major Bowes' Amateur Hour.<sup>70</sup>

Bennett, Martin, and the various student loan or scholarship organizations were able to find financial remuneration for the many students unable to pay the full cost of their college educations. During the worst of the Depression years, 1930-35, college campus enrollment

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<sup>67</sup> Student Self-Help Industries 1930-1932, Folder, Box #9, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>68</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 250.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul Bishoff, Letter to Courtney Ann Vaughn (January 10, 1980). The author wrote: Mr. Iba: Basketball's Aggie Iron Duke (Oklahoma City, 1980).

<sup>70</sup> The O'Collegian (May 20, 1939), pp. 1 & 2; Ibid. (September 14, 1943), p. 1; Ibid. (November 12, 1937), p. 1; Murl Rogers, Personal interview (July 26, 1979).

remained constant, (around 4,000 students), and by 1939 it had steadily increased to almost 6,000.<sup>71</sup>

As the institution grew, so did the administrative responsibilities. By the early forties, each school or division had at least one vice-dean, and Bennett's office staff was also larger.<sup>72</sup> As the college president's jobs multiplied, the Agriculture Board rewarded him with salaries of \$9,000 and then \$10,000 per year, in 1936 and 1937, respectively.<sup>73</sup>

#### Bennett's Influence Absorbs the State

The college president's expanding role in college extension and New Deal programs had also enhanced his state power and prestige. As the 1930's progressed into the early forties, Bennett's list of public service positions grew longer. He chaired state branches of the United Service Organization and the Agricultural Resources and Production Service, added to the State Defense Committee and the formerly mentioned Soil Conservation Service. Bennett was also president of the American Cotton Cooperative Association; held a seat on the Oklahoma Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company board of directors and was Vice-President of the

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<sup>71</sup>William Edward McFarland, "A History of Student Financial Assistance Programs at Oklahoma State University, 1891-1978, With an Emphasis on the Creation and Administration of the Lou Wentz Foundation" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1979), p. 55.

<sup>72</sup>Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1942), pp. xiii-xiv. One of the new administrators was Oliver S. Willham, vice-dean of Agriculture and future Oklahoma A. & M. College President.

<sup>73</sup>"State Board of Agriculture Minutes" (April 6 & 7, 1936); Ibid. (June 22 & 23, 1937).

Oklahoma Chemurgic Council to coordinate science, industry and the agriculture of Oklahoma.<sup>74</sup>

Bennett's informal state influence intensified with each passing year.<sup>75</sup> When the presidency of Southeastern Teachers College opened, educators and Durant citizens consistently asked Bennett to endorse candidates.<sup>76</sup> Apparently Bennett's approval was central to the selection process. Don Atkinson of the Oklahoma State Soldiers Relief Commission of Durant wrote Bennett in 1937 stating, "regardless of who is appointed to the position . . . everyone in this section believes that no one can be named without your consent."<sup>77</sup>

In 1938, State Representative Clyde L. Andrews and Oklahoma State Democratic Central Committee Chairman R. Lewis Barton turned to Bennett and State Superintendent Crable, whom Barton believed could prevent

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<sup>74</sup>The O'Collegian (June 4, 1942), p. 1; Ibid. (November 11, 1937), 1.

<sup>75</sup>Bennett's surviving personal papers substantiated this claim, although many records in his public files seem to be missing. Richard Kinzie, historian and expert on President Harry S. Truman's Point Four program, explained to this author that for several days after his death Bennett's office was closed even to his daughter, Liberty. At this time, many number of his former college or Oklahoma government associates could have destroyed many of the college president's papers. Another possible explanation for the lack of personal letters and documents was that Bennett preferred to discuss politics and any other delicate subjects in person. In answering some of his mail, even to personal friends like Durant newspaper owner Walter Archibald, Bennett noted that he would discuss their political opponents in the State Legislature when in Durant.

<sup>76</sup>John A. MacDonald, "Letter to H. G. Bennett" (September 24, 1937), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.; Don E. Atkinson, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (May 17, 1937); Bennett-Jobs-Politics-etc. 1934-1937, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Central State Teachers College president John Mosaley from being deposed.<sup>78</sup> Also that year, through black educator S. C. Counter, the state's minority group educators asked Bennett whom he wanted them to back for Governor and State Superintendent in 1938.<sup>79</sup> by the 1940's, Bennett's stature was so great that few Oklahoma college presidencies could be filled without his sanction.<sup>80</sup>

Others sought his aid to secure jobs outside the realm of higher education. Oklahoma House Member Henry Worthington wrote Bennett in 1942 inquiring who would be the next Speaker of the State House. Worthington then requested the college president's assistance in obtaining the House Agricultural Committee Chair for himself.<sup>81</sup> Another lawmaker, Ernest W. Tate, penned that J. Carl Wright, a federal Agricultural Adjustment Act administrator, told Tate he must have Bennett's approval before being assigned any job with the agency.<sup>82</sup> Illustrating that Bennett had a reputation for influencing other state and federal government programs,

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<sup>78</sup> Clyde L. Andrews, "Letter to A. L. Crable and H. G. Bennett" (August 3, 1938), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater); R. Lewis Barton, "Letter to A. L. Crable and H. G. Bennett" (August 3, 1938), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>79</sup> G. Walter Archibald, "Letter to Dr. Bennett" (May 5, 1938), Bennett-Jobs-Politics-etc. 1934-37, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>80</sup> Joe Hubbell, Personal telephone interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); The O'Collegian (April 29, 1943), p. 1; Hawks, Personal interview. The latter two sources verified that Bennett's opinions and recommendations also seated many Chamber of Commerce and city council members, particularly in Southeastern Oklahoma.

<sup>81</sup> Henry Worthington, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (July 17, 1943), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>82</sup> Ernest W. Tate, "Letter to H. G. Bennett" (April 29, 1941), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Representative Tom Jelks asked the educator to obtain a job for one of his constituents on any of the numerous state or federal agencies with which Bennett had "influence."<sup>83</sup>

Even though control of federal money and the A. & M. college's extensive state-wide programs generated much of Bennett's power, his progressive philosophy nurtured much personal popularity with many Oklahomans, for he blended conservative individualism with liberal notions of cooperative action. Bennett's speeches stressed the need for more permanent solutions to the state and country's economic problems, other than the New Deal relief measures. He complimented Agricultural Adjustment Act success in stimulating and widening land ownership through long term credit loans but questioned the lasting effectiveness of producing artificial scarcity to encourage high prices from farm products. Bennett also criticized the public service alphabet agencies, claiming that only the WPA and the federal Economic Recovery Act helped prepare people for future employment and the nation for economic stability, through secondary services schooling.<sup>84</sup>

Despite Bennett's disappointments with the New Deal, as a loyal progressive, he did not join southern demagogues like Huey Long who railed against Roosevelt. In fact, the college president was critical of men like Long and ultra-conservative Chicago, Illinois, radio-priest

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<sup>83</sup> Tom Jelks, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (March 7, 1941), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>84</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "After Oil, What?" The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Charles Coughlin, labeling them oppressors of democracy and individualism.<sup>85</sup> Resembling past progressive leaders, Bennett encouraged Oklahomans to form more professional self-help organizations like Oklahoma's Livestock Growers Association which initiated rescue and price control plans of his own.<sup>86</sup> In so doing, citizens illustrated, "the genius of the democratic society," which merged, "individualism with social progress," Bennett said.<sup>87</sup> Only by uniting in voluntary efforts could professionals, farmers, and other groups combat, "a regime which gives the few an opportunity for being shrewd in the management of monetary business," Bennett concluded.<sup>88</sup>

Relentlessly, Bennett appealed to Oklahomans' sense of moral obligation to gain support for his concept of cooperation. During a public library dedication ceremony he told a group of Stillwater residents that they were erecting a monument to social consciousness. On another occasion, he sermonized that, "what shall it profit a nation to dominate the earth and lose its [intellectual] soul."<sup>89</sup> Bennett also spoke for

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<sup>85</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "An Economic Basis for American Individualism," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>86</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Message to the Oklahoma Livestock Growers, A Re-Affirmation of Faith," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry Garland Bennett, "Membership Responsibility," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry Garland Bennett, "Cotton Production Looks Ahead," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>87</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Looking Forward in Education," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>88</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Your Education in the Light of the Depression," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>89</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "After Oil, What?"

community involvement in public schools. No one, he asserted, should abdicate the responsibilities of promoting democratic citizenship principles in public education.<sup>90</sup>

State Superintendent Crable supported Bennett's efforts to weave progressive ideas into the state's educational system. Crable conferred in 1936 with Columbia Teachers College Professor Paul R. Mort concerning the poor conditions in Oklahoma primary and secondary schools.<sup>91</sup> Crable and Bennett also ridiculed the state's school taxation methods which did nothing to promote equally equipped state public schools. Instead, current practices allowed each district to fund its own institutions; therefore, wealthy areas had good facilities and teachers, while poor ones had nothing. As a remedy, Bennett called for redistricting laws and legislation which would demand a more equitable distribution of public school funds.<sup>92</sup>

#### Bennett's Power was Threatened

The college president's ideas and kudos caused many to support him for Governor in 1938, a move which he appeared to consider for a time.<sup>93</sup> Bennett enjoyed the notoriety which his potential candidacy brought the college. However, the traditional Oklahoma and new national conservatism

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<sup>90</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Partners in Progress," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>91</sup>The O'Collegian (November 21, 1936), p. 1.

<sup>92</sup>Henry Garland Bennett, "Looking Forward in Education," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry Garland Bennett, "Schools and Taxes," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #4, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>93</sup>Daily Oklahoman (January 7, 1938), p. 4; Ibid. (February 9, 1938), p. 4.



and new nationalistic sentiment, paradoxically fattened by New Deal money, began rearing its head once again in the late thirties.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the new atmosphere probably contributed to Bennett's eventual decision not to run for public office.

Oklahomans' fear of communist and fascist inroad in countries abroad and President Roosevelt's growing authoritarian leadership at home affected the A. & M. campus.<sup>95</sup> Bennett received many letters accusing the college librarian, Ico Iben, of being a fascist and German sympathizer. The Agriculture Board and Bennett felt enough pressure to fire Iben, although the librarian claimed the college president had given him faculty status and tenure. Repeated AAUP inquiries on Iben's behalf did not ferret out the truth, nor did it restore his job.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the board hired Edmund Low who became an invaluable replacement for Bennett's old researchers, Scroggs and Conger; Low remained at A. & M. long after the college president's death.<sup>97</sup>

New attitudes in Oklahoma government did not dissuade Bennett from involving himself in politics. In fact, he and the Oklahoma State

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<sup>94</sup> Barnes, Personal interview.

<sup>95</sup> Morgan & Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 131-133. Many Americans joined Oklahomans during the late thirties who watchfully observed tyranny and authoritarianism. Adolf Hitler's Germany began fulfilling a dream of world domination; Japan began the forceful realization of the Southeast Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere; and Spain was wracked with revolution involving radically "left" and "right" wing forces. At home the United States Supreme Court declared the Agricultural Adjustment and the National Recovery Acts unconstitutional, and President Roosevelt responded by attempting to "pack" the Court with pro-Roosevelt justices.

<sup>96</sup> Ico Iben Case 1935-1940, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>97</sup> Raymond Girod, Personal interview, Stillwater (February 28, 1979).

Democratic Chairman and New Deal advocate Robert S. Kerr, campaigned discreetly for the next Governor, Red Phillips. Bennett wrote many of his speeches and authored the Democratic platform on conservation of the state's natural resources, while Kerr served as Phillip's campaign manager.<sup>98</sup> However, as Governor he was not an appealing leader who could unite the state's anti- and pro-New Deal forces. Phillips was a suspicious man who ordered his gubernatorially controlled higher educational governing boards to fire college presidents whom he suspected of disloyalty.<sup>99</sup> He also took no advice from Kerr on legislative proposals and refused to support Roosevelt at the 1940 National Democratic Convention.<sup>100</sup>

Obviously, Kerr and Phillips soon grew to dislike each other, but the conciliatory Bennett managed to tolerate the governor for a time.<sup>101</sup> Even though Phillips' political supporters even requested that Bennett give jobs to former campaign workers, Bennett avoided overtly rebellious behavior.<sup>102</sup> Speaking at the 1938 legislative budget hearings, he humbly stated that A. & M. would accept its share of the revenue losses needed to comply with the Phillips' administration budgetary cuts.

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<sup>98</sup> Lysle Boren, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (July 14, 1979); Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to Don Welch" (September 12, 1938), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special collections (Stillwater); Burl Hays, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 27, 1979); Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 30, 1979).

<sup>99</sup> Boren, Personal interview; Roy Stewart, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 20, 1979).

<sup>100</sup> James Ralph Scales, "A Political History of Oklahoma" (Unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1949), pp. 436-40.

<sup>101</sup> Anne Hodges Morgan, Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years (Norman, 1977), p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> Pete Weaver, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (July 21, 1938), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Perhaps, Bennett avoided the worst by taking a humble attitude. At least he kept his job at a time when Phillip's meddling eventually drove Oklahoma University President W. B. Bizzell to resign.<sup>103</sup>

The State Higher Educational Coordinating Board's ability to restrict institutional spending attracted Phillips. Consequently, he favored a 1941 legislative bill authorizing a referendum on the state constitutional amendment permanently to establish the body. The measure became law, spawning the first agency of its kind in the nation, the Oklahoma State System for Higher Education supervised by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.<sup>104</sup> Nine members were now constitutionally, rather than statutorially, authorized to recommend higher education budgets, allot state legislative appropriations, prescribe standards, determine needed course areas, grant degrees and propose student fees.<sup>105</sup> Although Phillips was not much interested in the other board functions, the agency also granted degrees, regulated fees and prescribed standards. Thus, Oklahoma voters implanted machinery essential to progressive educational planning in the future.<sup>106</sup>

Attesting to Bennett's prestige, Phillips appointed Mel A. Nash,

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<sup>103</sup> The O'Collegian (March 14, 1939), pp. 1 & 2; Ibid. (November 20, 1943), pp. 1 & 2. During his term, Governor Phillips inspired passage of a State Constitutional Amendment which required that the Oklahoma treasury maintain a balanced budget. For reference to this measure see: Morgan & Morgan, Oklahoma, p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> Lyman A. Glenny, Robert O. Berdahl, Ernest G. Palola and James G. Paltridge, Coordinating Higher Education for the 70's: Multi-campus and Statewide Guidelines for Practice (Berkeley, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education (Oklahoma City, 1976), p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Hoig, "A History of the Development of Institutions," pp. 202-204.

Bennett's friend and co-founder of the Red Red Rose as Chancellor of the State Regents, while Bennett himself became Executive Secretary.<sup>107</sup>

President Bizzell once cryptically revealed his opposition to the agricultural college president's domination in a letter questioning the credentials of the Regent's Director of Studies John Oliver, also an Oklahoma A. & M. employee.<sup>108</sup>

Phillips' professional courtship with Bennett neared an end in 1942, after the Governor asked the college president to run for the state chief executive's post. Phillips accurately estimated that a combination of his and Bennett's political support would defeat Kerr.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Bennett appeared to be polishing his public image for the race, when early in 1942 the Agriculture Board announced that he refused to take a \$2,000 pay raise.<sup>110</sup> Concerned about the potential opposition, Kerr drove to Stillwater and asked Bennett to step out of the race. The college president agreed, and although the two had been friends through the state's Baptist Convention and Democratic party, their alliance was bound

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<sup>107</sup> E. H. Bingham and Mel A. Nash, Personal interview, Edmond (July 27, 1979).

<sup>108</sup> W. B. Bizzell, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (August 1, 1939), Coordination Board for Higher Education 1939, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to W. B. Bizzell (August 8, 1939), Coordination Board for Higher Education 1939, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater); Henry G. Bennett and John Oliver, "A System of Higher Education for Oklahoma" (Oklahoma City, 1939), Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>109</sup> Hawks, Personal interview; Hays, Personal interview; The O'Collegian (December 11, 1941), p. 1; Ibid., (January 8, 1942), p. 1; Anne Hodges Morgan, Robert S. Kerr, p. 13.

<sup>110</sup> State v. Henry G. Bennett et al., Oklahoma Criminal Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 755-758, Oklahoma State Library (Oklahoma City).

forever.<sup>111</sup> Phillips retaliated for what he considered Bennett's betrayal. During the fall of 1942, a lame-duck state administrative period, Phillips announced that the Oklahoma State Treasurer, Frank Carter, charged Bennett with secretly taking the \$2,000 salary raise which he had supposedly turned down. The college president had actually drawn it from a college fund not intended for salaries, Carter stated. Excluding Bennett, the Agriculture Board met to discuss the matter and decided to rehire him in 1943 at \$10,000 per year.<sup>112</sup> However, this was not the end of the educator's trouble.

As early as 1936, some state legislators publicly ridiculed the college president's manipulative powers. Representative Sam Whitacker criticized Bennett's maneuvering which had produced the A. & M. college field house.<sup>113</sup> More privately, during Marland's term, some of House Speaker J. T. Daniel's constituents threatened to fight Bennett's alleged efforts to get Daniel re-elected in their district.<sup>114</sup> Although the charges remained unsubstantiated, Bennett did make a faculty patronage appointment for one of the representative's key campaign workers. Other lawmakers complained that the college president had reneged on his

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<sup>111</sup>Hawks, Personal interview.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.; The O'Collegian (November 11, 1942), p. 1; Ibid. (November 10, 1942), p. 1; State v. Henry G. Bennett et. al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 755-758.

<sup>113</sup>The O'Collegian (May 2, 1937), p. 1.

<sup>114</sup>Sam Ash, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (May 20, 1938), Bennett-Jobs-Politics-etc., 1934-37, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater). J. T. Daniel, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (July 16, 1940), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

promise to award jobs to political favorites.<sup>115</sup> Even Bennett's close friend and future Oklahoma Governor Raymond Gary, was furious because the college president promised to employ a Gary man and then forestalled the agreement.<sup>116</sup> Such hedging was a typical Bennett technique when dealing with mounting pressure.<sup>117</sup> The educator once said that he never lied to children, because that was a good way to lose a friend. On the other hand, Bennett explained, "adults don't expect you to always tell the truth."<sup>118</sup>

Matters grew worse, and Bennett faced the forties with several State House members plotting to strip the educator of his political "power." Bennett's friend, Durant newspaper editor Walter Archibald, suggested that the complaints might stem from jealousy coupled with Bennett's inability to be an employment dispenser for state officials.<sup>119</sup> However, some of

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<sup>115</sup> Kirksey M. Nix, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (September 10, 1942), John M. Holliman, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (February 6, 1942), Creekmore Wallace, "Letter to H. G. Bennett" (April 14, 1943), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>116</sup> Raymond Gary, "Letter to H. G. Bennett" (September 20, 1941), Politics-1915, 1927, 1931, 1934, 1937, 1941, 1948, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater). For reference to Gary's gubernatorial election see: Directory of Oklahoma, 1979 (Oklahoma City, 1979), p. 80.

<sup>117</sup> Bill Abbott, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 15, 1979); M. R. Lohmann, Personal interview, Stillwater (June 20, 1979); Joe Hubbell, Personal telephone interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979).

<sup>118</sup> Babb, Personal interview.

<sup>119</sup> Walter Archibald, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (January 27, 1939), Bennett-Jobs-Politics 1934-37, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater); Guy A. Curry, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (July 18, 1940), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater). Haskell and McIntosh County politician state senator Curry asked Bennett for a complete list of all A. & M. students which A. & M. either employed or funded through scholarships. The last document signified the close watch and subsequent pressure which certain legislators exacted in order to fund their constituents.

the anti-Bennett sentiment was based on political ideology, as evidenced by a 1939 Blanchard, Oklahoma farmer, F. A. Hewett who wrote to Bennett, "you 'school bloc' members have made your selves so formidable that most politicians don't dare attack . . . I am in hopes that this gov. Phillips will dare to forever break you fellows."<sup>120</sup>

The most harmful attack on Bennett's character came as a result of what became known as the "textbook conspiracy." News of a fraud became public when House Speaker Daniels and ex-Governor Marland's patronage dispenser Pete Drake were convicted of federal income tax evasion. They had amassed \$98,085 in bribes from various textbook companies which sold the State of Oklahoma public school books. In return for the money, the two men convinced Marland's appointed Textbook Commission to adopt the corrupted publishers' wares, forcing Depression Era Oklahomans to spend \$1,158,452 more for school books than was necessary.<sup>121</sup>

Seizing the opportunity to attack Bennett, Phillips hired conservative Democrat and attorney Gomer Smith to investigate the allegations that Bennett, as an author of at least two of the textbooks in question, participated in the plot.<sup>122</sup> Apparently, Smith never filed charges, probably because Tulsa County Attorney Dixie Gilmer, another anti-New

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<sup>120</sup> F. A. Hewett, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (October 20, 1939), Propaganda 1938-1949, Folder, Box #2, Special Collection (Stillwater). Note that an earlier A. & M. college employee filed this document in a "propaganda" folder.

<sup>121</sup> State v. Henry G. Bennett et al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 720-726.

<sup>122</sup> The Stillwater Gazette (December 11, 1942), p. 1.

Deal Democrat, spearheaded the extensive Tulsa County Grand Jury investigation on the book controversy, beginning late in 1942.<sup>123</sup>

After interviewing more than 150 witnesses, including Bennett, the tribunal indicted the college president, claiming he was a co-conspirator in the textbook scandal along with, Drake, Daniels (the Textbook Commission Chairman) and State Superintendent Crable. Other commission members Ed Morrison, O. E. Shaw, J. E. Perry and School Book Depository owner, Willis Smith, were involved.<sup>124</sup> Bennett was implicated primarily because his and Napoleon Conger's Steps in Arithmetic, published by the American Book Company, was considered one of the fraudulent adoptions. Though Governor Murray had personally assigned the Textbook Commission members who had purchased Bennett's book, the Marland commission had readopted an allegedly revised version, which cost more money.<sup>125</sup> However, only a few words or phrases had been changed in the new Bennett-Conger work.<sup>126</sup>

Most of the conspiracy evidence against Bennett evolved through his close association with Crable. The inquest's report explained that in 1934, Bennett had appeared before the Textbook Commission and successfully urged the readoption of his revised publication. Although a 1935 Oklahoma State Attorney General's opinion stated that the renewal was illegal, all public schools continued to use Bennett's book until 1939.

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<sup>123</sup> Gilmer, Personal interview, Okmulgee (September 5, 1979); State v. Henry G. Bennett et al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 729-758.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> State v. Henry G. Bennett et al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (March 24, 1944), pp. 4-15. The entire grand jury report was entered in full into this trial court record.

<sup>126</sup> Gilmer, Personal interview.



At this time a new Textbook Commission, which Phillips had appointed (with the exception of Crable) rejected Bennett's work. Consequently, the Superintendent refused to certify any of the 1939 adoptions, if Bennett's book was not among them. In addition, Crable secretly inspired a successful law suit from Pontotoc County school district which legally restrained Crable from authorizing any new books. Through these exploits, the college president's friend kept Bennett's book in use until 1941, when the State Legislature passed a law requiring the public schools to use the 1939 accepted books.<sup>127</sup>

The grand jury also indicted Bennett on three perjury charges, noting that he headed the "school bloc," defined as a powerful political-educational machine, and apparently had given false testimony to avoid exposing himself. The charges stemmed from Bennett's statements claiming he did not know whether or not he had contributed money to the William Henry Murray Educational Foundation, that he knew nothing about his book revisions and that he had never participated in any political campaign.<sup>128</sup>

A trial court later found Bennett innocent of all the grand jury charges, except the third indictment of perjury. Thus, the state of Oklahoma appealed the conspiracy verdict against Bennett and his co-defendants; while the college president appealed the state's conviction on the third perjury charge. In October of 1945, the Oklahoma State Criminal Court of Appeals ruled on the two separate cases. The court decreed that Bennett was not guilty of perjury, due to a technicality,

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<sup>127</sup> State v. Henry G. Bennett et al., Oklahoma Criminal Court of Appeals, Record of the Court Clerk (July, 1944), pp. 745-755.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.; Bennett v. District Court of Tulsa, County, et al. 162 2nd 561, 1945, pp. 561-563.

that the grand jury venue (Tulsa County) was not within the jurisdiction of Oklahoma City, where Bennett's political activity was alleged to have taken place.<sup>129</sup> The court acquitted Bennett of the conspiracy charge, stating that not enough evidence existed to link him to the crime. Yet, presiding Judge Oras Shaw affirmed that a felony had taken place. The judge declared that not only were Daniels, Drake, and Crable guilty of conspiracy, but also the latter had stolen Oklahoma State Welfare Department money intended to purchase poor children's school books. However, Shaw also exonerated these defendants, citing two technicalities, incorrect venue and the statute of limitations.<sup>130</sup>

Bennett withstood the three-year long court battle, as he did any other assault, by keeping his eyes on the future and remaining convinced that he had necessary duties to perform.<sup>131</sup> However, it was not Bennett's fortitude alone which sustained him. Governor Kerr made him an unofficial advisor on Oklahoma educational, agricultural, and industrial matters, and he appointed Bennett Chairman of the Oklahoma State Planning and Resources Board.<sup>132</sup> The two men also accepted executive

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 570.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp. 581-588. Morrison, Shaw and Perry were not included in this decision, because they filed separate motions.

<sup>131</sup> Abbott, Personal interview. This interview explored the characteristically positive and futuristic attitude with which Bennett faced any adversity. Hawks, Personal interview; Hays, Personal interview; Bill Kerr, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979). Also by 1946, an attorney, John Monk, was assigned to the college president's office. Bennett and Monk became very close and the lawyer, no doubt, helped avoid legal controversies in the future. For verification of Monk's employment see: Bulletin: Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1946), p. xxxi. Also, the following citations verified Monk's close contact with, and persistent loyalty to Bennett: Abbott, Personal interview; Raymond Girod, Personal interview.

<sup>132</sup> The O'Collegian (April 29, 1943), p. 1.

positions on the Oklahoma Baptist Convention, Kerr taking the presidency and Bennett the vice-presidency. Furthermore, Kerr forces in the state House of Representatives blocked by one vote a move to impeach Crable and discouraged attempts to investigate Bennett. As a result, Kerr's handpicked House Speaker, John Davis Hill, resigned in protest.<sup>133</sup> Finally, the state also initiated an investigation against Phillips for allegedly taking bribes to grant Oklahoma penitentiary inmates' paroles.<sup>134</sup> Phillips' never again held an elective state office.<sup>135</sup>

Although Bennett never overtly fought battles in the press, he protected the college's public image during his ordeal by hiring a journalist, Richard Caldwell, who had syndicated news source connections. Caldwell wrote positive pieces on A. & M. deans' and faculty members' work and leaked them to various state newspapers.<sup>136</sup>

World War II was another factor which diverted criticism away from Bennett and other New Deal Democrats, both in Oklahoma and elsewhere. Americans tended to rally around President Roosevelt in the time of national crisis. Similarly, Bennett's accomplishments as the head of a large college dedicated to economic recovery and to a war mobilization program, must have predominated over many people's doubts about his honesty.

In any case, A. & M.'s developments during the late thirties and

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<sup>133</sup> Anne Morgan, Robert S. Kerr, p. 20.

<sup>134</sup> News article, Randall Cobb #1, Folder, Box, Attorney General's Executive Directions Correspondence, Oklahoma State Library (Oklahoma City).

<sup>135</sup> Directory of Oklahoma, 1979, p. 90.

<sup>136</sup> John Hamilton, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 13, 1979).

early forties and Bennett's statewide educational innovations were commendable. Perhaps many accomplishments would not have been possible without his political and educational connections. Yet, Bennett's activities began to show the imperfect side of the leader, a man who like many other mortals not only built monuments to ideas, but ones to himself.

## CHAPTER VI

### OKLAHOMA'S INDUSTRIALIZATION CHAMPION AND NATIONALISM'S SERVANT, 1942-1951

As Bennett's political opposition dwindled in numbers and his allies, like Robert Kerr grew in stature, the college president committed A. & M. to a special aspect of the land-grant service function. Bennett welcomed the national higher educational trends toward utilitarian general or vocational and scientific education. Furthermore, he held that Oklahoma could eradicate its almost mercantilistic dependency on states east of the Mississippi River by employing progressive ideals of cooperation, not government coercion, to promote regional industry. The new manufacturers would in turn support and hire graduates from A. & M.'s commercial, technical and professional programs.<sup>1</sup>

#### Oklahoma in the Forties

Pre- and post-World War II nationalism, fueled first by fear of fascist- and later of communist-spurred aggression in Eastern Europe and Asia, spawned higher educational trends throughout the forties. However, the same nationalism fomented an American era of malevolence toward any fellow citizen who appeared to be "unamerican." Oklahoma did

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald D. Nash, The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis (Englewood Cliffs, 1973). Nash documented and discussed the almost colonial-like status of many western states throughout much of the twentieth century.

not escape the hysteria, and the post-war A. & M. campus throbbled with racism and suspicion of allegedly disloyal professors. Yet Bennett characteristicly did not allow controversy to arrest either the college's growth or his own possession of political power. For him, success only became sweeter.

Bennett Advocated Scientific and Industrial  
Research at Oklahoma A. & M.

Despite Oklahoman's persistently conservative attitudes, by the early forties many state residents were dependent on welfare; consequently, tax revenues were sparse.<sup>2</sup> In addition, more than thirty percent of the state's agrarians remained sharecroppers throughout the decade.<sup>3</sup> Yet, war demands for men, armaments, and other commodities remedied enough of Oklahoma's economic problems, so that Governor Kerr was able to leave a surplus in the state treasury when leaving office in 1947. Yet, Bennett and the Governor knew that without the war, Oklahoma was just an agrarian state which could not keep pace with a modernizing nation.<sup>4</sup> On occasion, the A. & M. president openly scouredged those who opposed "progress."<sup>5</sup> No doubt, speaking for both of them, Kerr once said of

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<sup>2</sup>H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (New York, 1977), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>Organization for European Economic Co-operation, Report of a Working Party of European Experts, Agricultural Extension Services in the USA (Paris, 1951), p. 157.

<sup>4</sup>Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 30, 1979); Morgan and Morgan, Oklahoma, pp. 138-140.

<sup>5</sup>Russell Babb, Personal interview, Stillwater (August 13, 1979).

conservative critic and Tulsa World owner Gene Lorton, "he came kicking and screaming into the twentieth century and hasn't quit yet."<sup>6</sup>

In 1943, James H. Arrington, vice-chairman of the Oklahoma State House of Representatives' Industrial Planning Board, asked Bennett and his staff to formulate a plan encouraging manufacturing growth in Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup> The president and Holger G. Thuesen, the Acting Assistant Dean of Engineering, responded. Industrialization was mandatory in Oklahoma, the report began. While small business enterprises would be a good start, outside capital and talent should follow, the authors explained.<sup>8</sup> Bennett and Thuesen named the Oklahoma State Industrial Development Bureau as the central state agency for encouraging and planning the new growth. Yet, they suggested, "community civic bodies," "industrial associations" and "state institutions" be involved in the bureau's educational design, market research, promotion and publicity.<sup>9</sup>

Bennett and Thuesen suggested that A. & M. house the Industrial Development Bureau from the rough draft proposal.<sup>10</sup> In 1948, Bennett hired Randall Klemme, an Iowa State University Ph.D. and former Oklahoma A. & M. agricultural economist, to head a College Agricultural Industrial

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<sup>6</sup>Hawks, Personal interview.

<sup>7</sup>J. H. Arrington, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (January 18, 1943) and Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to J. H. Arrington" (January 28, 1943), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>8</sup>"A Plan for Oklahoma to Encourage Industrial Development," Industrial Planning for Oklahoma, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Development Service.<sup>11</sup> The project functioned as a separate college division, conducting and publishing Oklahoma community study reports. These booklets piloted cities and counties through planned commercialism, by advertising an area's human, natural, economic and municipal resources added to subsequent industrial possibilities.<sup>12</sup>

A welcome change from conservative Governors Murray and Phillips, Bennett acquired a progressive cohort in Governor Kerr. Together they expanded A. & M.'s service function by promoting more industrially-oriented programs than the college had ever offered. However, state legislative insurgent reaction to Bennett and Kerr's modernization schemes threatened to topple the college president's broad based attraction to both rural and progressive thinkers. Cast in the wake of statewide publicity concerning his machine-boss role, a cadre of Oklahoma farmers and their legislators interpreted Bennett's enthusiasm for industrialization as a dictatorial challenge to the centrality of agrarian research and assistance programs at A. & M.

#### Bennett Fended Off the Last Vestiges of His Political Opposition

In 1944, Governor Kerr had paved the way for A. & M.'s new-found industrial leadership by freeing the college from the Agricultural Board's control. Due to Kerr's influence, the Oklahoma Legislature passed a bill

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<sup>11</sup>Abbott, Personal interview; Bulletin: The Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1951), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Abbott, Personal interview; Agricultural Industrial Development Service, Hugo: A Condensation of a Diagnostic Report (Stillwater, 1950). The latter source is one of the many research projects which Klemme's staff conducted.



proposing a state Constitutional Amendment which established the Oklahoma State Board of ~~Regents~~ for all A. & M. state institutions.<sup>13</sup> The governing body was ~~similar~~ to the ideal which Bennett had fashioned in his dissertation many ~~years~~ ago, in that it had eight members, each of whom the Governor appointed to staggered terms and the State Senate approved. Dissimilar to the educator's plan, the President of the Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture was an automatic ninth addition to the group, and a majority of the ~~eight~~ others were required to be in some form of agribusiness.<sup>14</sup>

At Kerr's insistence, the bill mandated only a simple majority vote rather than a plurality of all the state's registered voters, to adopt the amendment.<sup>15</sup> It passed, and the Governor named the regents in October of 1944.<sup>16</sup> However, in March of 1945, the Legislature refused to sanction some members, and State Senator Robert Burns initiated legislation stating that a majority of the A. & M. Board must be practicing farmers.<sup>17</sup> Responding to the lawmakers' pressure, Kerr made several new

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<sup>13</sup> Phillip Reed Rulon, Oklahoma State University--Since 1890 (Stillwater, 1951), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> State of Oklahoma Statutes, Article 6, Section 31A (July, 1944), p. 200.

<sup>15</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 225-226.

<sup>16</sup> "Minutes of the Oklahoma A. & M. Regents" (October 7, 1944); Minutes of the Board of Regents, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>17</sup> Daily Oklahoman (March 3, 1945), p. 12; Ibid. (March 2, 1945), p. 4; Ibid. (March 6, 1945), pp. 1-2; Ibid. (March 13, 1945), p. 2.

appointments,<sup>18</sup> but the new group still shared Bennett's and the Governor's enthusiasm for industrialization.<sup>19</sup>

Oklahoma rancher, farmer, owner of Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company and A. & M. regent, R. T. Stuart was one of Bennett's most important allies.<sup>20</sup> The college president served on the Mid-Continent board of directors and successfully worked with Stuart on college business until 1951. Stuart, like Kerr and Bennett, was convinced that Oklahoma should manufacture its own goods. He once voiced that

there's nothing the matter with Oklahoma except that entirely too many of us get up in the morning at the alarm of a Connecticut clock, button on a pair of shoes made in Boston, wash in a cotton towel made in New Hampshire, sit down to a Grand Rapids table, eat pancakes made from Minneapolis flour and bacon fried on a St. Louis stove, buy fruit put up in California, put on a hat made in Philadelphia, hitch a Detroit tin mule to an Ohio plow and work like fury all day on an Oklahoma farm covered with a New England mortgage.<sup>21</sup>

Although Bennett, Stuart, and Kerr succeeded in redirecting Oklahoma A. & M., some anti-Bennett legislative sentiment, residue from the textbook trials fomented another 1945 session bill. State Senator Allen Nichols introduced a measure which would remove Bennett, Agriculture Dean Blizzard, Extension Director Schole, and Vocational/Agricultural Education Director J. B. Perkey from the Soil Conservation Commission and

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<sup>18</sup>"Minutes of the Oklahoma A. & M. Regents" (January 6, 1945), Minutes of the Board of Regents, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>19</sup>Daily Oklahoman (March 13, 1945), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Henry G. Bennett, This is Colonel Stuart (Stillwater, 1945), pp. 49-57.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-85.

replace the A. & M. staff with five "dirt farmers."<sup>22</sup> The State Senate passed Nichol's bill and sent it to the House. Here, pro-Bennett forces authored a compromise proposal which placed the farmers on the agency but also retained Bennett and his assistants.<sup>23</sup>

The last significant threat to Bennett's authority emerged in 1947 and dissipated when Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Dixie Gilmer promised, if elected, to fire Napoleon Conger, Schiller, Scroggs and Bennett.<sup>24</sup> Gilmer was silenced when Democrat Roy Turner won the race and proved to be cordial toward Bennett.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Turner named him to the Board of Control for the Southern Regional Education Council, a college and university organization which made articulation arrangements between its members.<sup>26</sup> Turner's successor, Democrat Johnston

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<sup>22</sup> Daily Oklahoman (March 1, 1945), p. 4; The O'Collegian (November 17, 1942), p. 1; Richard Caldwell, "Oklahoma A. & M. College: Agricultural Capital of the Southwest," Ranch and Farm World (January, 1951), Scrapbook, Folder, Box #4, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence). This first note detailed the soil commission controversy; the second mentioned Oklahoma A. & M. members; and the last verified Brown's Extension Director post as beginning in 1942.

<sup>23</sup> Daily Oklahoman (March 2, 1945), p. 4; Ibid. (March 9, 1945), p. 22; Al Nichols, "Letter to Henry Bennett" (November 1, 1944), Legislature 1937-1945, Folder, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater). The last reference indicated that personal ire could have motivated Nichol's move. For in 1944, he wrote Bennett to complain about not being consulted over the appointment of soil conservation personnel in his district. Ironically, Nichols criticized commission employees for hating the New Deal thus illustrated the plethora of political contingencies with which Bennett continually dealt.

<sup>24</sup> Stillwater Gazette (July 19, 1946), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 260.

<sup>26</sup> Regional Council for Education, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence); The Council of State Governments, Higher Education in the Forty-Eight States: A Report to the Governors' Conference (Chicago, 1950), pp.26-27.

Murray, son of Alfalfa Bill, also took an amicable stance toward the college president.<sup>27</sup> Most important, Bennett was always insured of Kerr's insurmountable backing and, in 1947, the ex-Governor became a United States Senator from Oklahoma. Along with Texas Senator Lyndon Johnson and Representative Sam Rayburn, Kerr eventually dominated the nation's decision-making process.<sup>28</sup>

Political smooth sailing left Bennett time for increased civic responsibilities, and as a result, he received many awards and honors during the late forties. The college president accepted a state Veterans of Foreign Wars citizenship medal, a National Flying Farmers' Association award, and a State Boy Scout Council commendation.<sup>29</sup> He was asked to spearhead the state's cancer drive, and in 1949, Bennett was the highest paid state official, earning \$15,000 per year in salary alone.<sup>30</sup> By the decade's end, the educator was listed in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Education and America's Blue Book.<sup>31</sup> To express their pleasure, the Stillwater Jaycees gave Bennett a testimonial and birthday

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<sup>27</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 260

<sup>28</sup> Anne Hodges Morgan, Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years (Norman, 1977), pp. 29-30, 240; Kerr, Personal interview; Luther Brannon, Personal interview (August 29, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> The O'Collegian (September 30, 1948), p. 1; Harry Clark, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (September 10, 1948), Correspondence general, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence); Daily Oklahoman, Miscellaneous, Folder, Box #3, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>30</sup> Daily Oklahoman (1949), Miscellaneous Folder, Box #3, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence); Ibid. February 8, 1949), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> "A. & M.'s Great Progress is Credited to Dr. Bennett," News article, Scrapbook, Folder, Box #5, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

dinner in 1949 which took place in the A. & M. field house. United States Senators Kerr and Elmer Thomas attended, along with a myriad of state legislators and other Oklahoma officials. Kerr, the major speaker, told the more than 2,000 persons assembled that Bennett, "could find more for [the] Governor of a state to do than anyone else."<sup>32</sup> In so doing, he bettered himself and adapted the A. & M. college to both the Second World War and post-war industrialization.

Bennett and Oklahoma A. & M. Adapted to  
War and Post-War Society

Not surprisingly, the college president had faced the international crisis with rhetoric similar to that of Woodrow Wilson. Bennett sermonized

we fight today for the preservation of the idea of social progress and the belief that in the common people everywhere lies the trust and most dependable approach to social, economic, political and spiritual truth. We fight for the rights of man to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, to a sense of individual worth, personal dignity, and political . . . inviolability.<sup>33</sup>

Essentially, he echoed that Americans were once again fighting "to save the world for democracy."<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, the global tragedy afforded Bennett the chance to implement a program of long-lasting interest to him. Like many other Americans,

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<sup>32</sup> Daily Oklahoman (December 17, 1949), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Stillwater News Press (September 13, 1944), Miscellaneous Folder, Box #3, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>34</sup> Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era: 1910-1917 (New York, 1954), p. 281.

he was taken with the majesty and utility of air travel.<sup>35</sup> The actions of Charles Lindberg, the lone flyer who had travelled across the ocean in 1927, symbolized Bennett's affixation for early aviation's expressions of individualism and progress--the triumph of one man teamed with one machine. A sure indication of the college president's enthusiasm, he longed to be on the first civilian excursion to the moon.<sup>36</sup>

In the mid 1930's, Bennett and Dean Philip Donnell co-sponsored the William K. Odor Foundation, organized to raise money for the construction of a passenger aircraft modeled after the design of Odor, a native Oklahoman.<sup>37</sup> Then in 1939, Donnell went to Washington, D. C. and there signed agreements with the United States Civil Aeronautics Authority to teach flying at the college. A. & M. leased Searcy Field, the Stillwater Airport and soon became one of the first colleges in the country to offer flight training. Although the military did not run the program, graduates were available for United States Air Force commissions. When Donnell took a military leave of absence in 1940, George Whiteside, an Annapolis, Maryland Military Academy graduate, became acting Dean of Engineering and headed the aviation program.<sup>38</sup>

Though the nation's aeronautic induction schools closed in 1944, the college retained the airport and the aviaional spotlight. In 1945,

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<sup>35</sup> Babb, Personal interview; Hoyte Walkup, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 22, 1979).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> "William K. Odor Foundation: A. & M. College" (Stillwater, 1934), Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>38</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 254; Airport 1948-1952, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); Airport etc. 1942-1948, 1948, 1950, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

Bennett founded the Oklahoma Flying Farmers Association, a group which eventually grew into an international organization of agrarians who used planes to tend stock and crops in bad weather and in other cases when expediency was of the essence.<sup>39</sup>

The Flying Farmers group was already convinced that air travel was exciting and useful, but Bennett had trouble conveying the message to his staff, even though the college eventually bought several new planes. The president coaxed college administrators and helped fund the new purchases at the same time by gradually selling a few automobiles from the college motor pool. The subsequent car shortage forced many officials to use the new college planes for state and national transportation.<sup>40</sup>

Almost immediately after the United States declared war on the Axis powers, Bennett visited the nation's capitol, making arrangements further to oblige the government at Oklahoma A. & M.<sup>41</sup> Soon, aviatational training was only one of twelve war-related study courses which either the United States Army, Navy or Air Force sponsored and primarily the Oklahoma A. & M. Engineering Division administered.<sup>42</sup> The Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) hoarded most of the notoriety; the School of Oriental Languages was the most pedantic; the Power and Propulsion Laboratory was the only failure. Bennett convinced the A. & M. Board to

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<sup>39</sup>"History: International Flying Farmers" (Wichita), Hoyte Walkup File, Stillwater Airport (Stillwater); Walkup, Personal interview.

<sup>40</sup>The O'Collegian (April 10, 1948), p. 1. Walkup, Personal interview.

<sup>41</sup>The O'Collegian (May 7, 1942), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Students and W. W. II 1940, 1942, 1947, Folder, War Production Training Program 1943, Folder, W. W. II OAMC War Records 1944-1946, Folder, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

accept part of what was formerly German diesel research equipment, but when it arrived, college officials found that the Russian Army had filched most of the parts.<sup>43</sup>

The Division of Agriculture also had a share of war assignments, controlling the effects of possible vegetation sabotage throughout the United States west of the Mississippi River.<sup>44</sup> Most of the work at the Agriculture Experiment Station was directed toward the national effort as well, such as research uncovering the most efficient and prolific food production methods.<sup>45</sup> In addition, nationally noted agriculture professor Al E. Darlo founded military schools for the federal government in Europe. The curricula were designed to resocialize and train former American soldiers for productive social civilian participation.<sup>46</sup>

After the war, American higher education continued to serve the nation and its citizens. Harvard issued a 1945 report entitled General Education in a Free Society which postulated that the college curriculum should meet the needs of a constantly evolving society, partially by providing citizenship instruction.<sup>47</sup> A year later, President Harry S. Truman appointed a committee to reexamine the mission of general

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<sup>43</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 26, 264-65, 269-270.

<sup>44</sup>Caldwell, "The Oklahoma A. & M. College."

<sup>45</sup>Francis Richard Gilmore, "A Historical Study of the Oklahoma State University Experiment Station" (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1967), p. 175.

<sup>46</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, p. 263.

<sup>47</sup>Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1964), p. 739.



education in American colleges and universities.<sup>48</sup> More specifically the government fostered utilitarianism by sponsoring scientific research in higher educational institutions both during and after the war. In 1950, Congress created the National Science Foundation to stimulate and central-ize the new emphasis.<sup>49</sup>

Two years before the Harvard book was published, Bennett had decided that A. & M.'s general education courses must become more viable to students. It was no longer good enough, Bennett told the faculty, to produce cultured and polite students. That notion was, "doomed to become [an] archeological exhibit of what the American college once was," he predicted.<sup>50</sup> Rather, college pedagogy should, "be vitalized with significance for day to day living in the modern age," he instructed.<sup>51</sup> Bennett welcomed the new national emphasis on higher education as a potential resolution of the social ills caused by, "technological employment, . . . growth and concentration of wealth [and the] . . . socio-economic shift from [an] agrarian to [an] industrial [era]."<sup>52</sup> By producing a socially conscious skilled and professional work force, the A. & M. college was contributing to a growing middle class and the

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<sup>48</sup> John S. Brubacker and Willis Rudy, Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities, 1936-1976, (New York, 1976), p. 234.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 231; Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 705.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Post-War Education," Vertical File, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>51</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Post-War Education."

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

subsequent "political reconstruction" of America, Bennett affirmed.<sup>53</sup>

With military induction courses nearing an end, Bennett enumerated to the faculty several other options promoting commodus education at A. & M., such as rehabilitation, trade skills, veteran career, clerical, and professional plans of study.<sup>54</sup>

Like several of A. & M.'s other war-time modifications, one of Bennett's post-war projects received national attention. In 1945, Donnell was back in Stillwater, and Bennett put the dean's talents to work designing a housing program for veterans and their families. The result was Veterans Village, a housing complex which lodged several thousand who elected a mayor and printed their own newspaper, The Village Times.<sup>55</sup> Benefitting the college and the returning service men, the federal government funded many of these veterans through the 1944 United States Serviceman's Readjustment Act.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the war era and after, Bennett attempted to keep in personal contact with many of the A. & M. students. No matter how large the institution grew, the college president consistently recognized that the basis of his job security stemmed at least in part from the citizens and A. & M. students, many of whom might later become influential businessmen and politicians. One such encounter occurred after the war, when Ellis Freeny, a lonely A. & M. student and cowboy from Caddo County,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; Henry Garland Bennett, "That Each May Carry His Own Land," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>54</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "Post-War Education."

<sup>55</sup> Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 270-272.

<sup>56</sup> Brubacker & Rudy, Higher Education in Transition, pp. 230-231.

received word that the president wanted to see him. Fearful of what the meeting might be about, Freeny was thrilled to discover that Bennett merely wanted to welcome his fellow southeastern Oklahoman to the campus and to encourage him to complete his degree. Freeny was not even aware that Bennett knew he was alive, but the young man later graduated and became a successful businessman and president of the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association. Moreover, Freeny always remained a Bennett supporter.<sup>57</sup>

In keeping with Bennett's adherence to the land-grant goal to serve each student, all of the A. & M. schools and divisions mirrored the new national departure away from ivory tower higher education. Art and Sciences expanded into a college under Scroggs with a separate School of Social Science containing several departments, Defense being one. Some of the most theoretical social science courses were integrated with other more practical offerings. For instance, the departments of Philosophy and Sociology, now operated in "co-operation" with the School of Education. Similarly, Arts and Sciences offered degree programs in conjunction with the Agriculture Division's Departments of: Journalism, Botany and Plant Pathology, or Sociology and Rural Life. In addition Scroggs became Director of the Oklahoma A. & M. Research Foundation.<sup>58</sup>

Other alterations came in the Engineering Division. In 1947, Dean Donnell resigned, and Edward R. Stapely, who held engineering graduate degrees from Cornell and Harvard universities, replaced him. The old

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<sup>57</sup> Personal communication with Ellis Freeny, Midwest City (February 19, 1980).

<sup>58</sup> Bulletin: The Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1951) pp. 12, 37.

division took a new name, the Oklahoma Institute of Technology,<sup>59</sup> and within it Bennett established an Okmulgee, Oklahoma, skills training school which Oklahoma A. & M. graduate Lloyd K. Covell headed.<sup>60</sup> Ideally situated, the institute was within a sixty-mile radius of one-half the state's mining and petroleum, one-third of the contract construction and one-fourth of the public utilities, wholesale trade units and service industries.<sup>61</sup>

The Okmulgee Institution had five divisions offering agriculture, industry, intensive business, feed trades and rehabilitation courses. Director Covell stated that by learning diversified and scientific farming techniques, the small Oklahoma farmer could survive on 160 acres. Thus, Covell held, Oklahoma A. & M. met goals which the Morrill Act had set decades ago. Many veterans profited from the twenty different professional preparatory study plans like plumbing or tailoring. Bennett purposely secured a former Okmulgee hospital to availing handicapped veterans with built-in support facilities. The intensive business area prepared both men and women for any number of occupations in accounting or secretarial work, and a career in restaurant management was within the usual Food Trades Division.<sup>62</sup>

The Agricultural Division under Dean Blizzard adapted to post-war

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<sup>59</sup> Bulletin: The Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1951), pp. 4-5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.; L. K. Covell, "What Education Means to Oklahoma Industries" (Okmulgee, 1950), p. 5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-11.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

demands, as well. The dean now oversaw seventeen experiment stations,<sup>63</sup> funded either by state or federal funds. The Veterinary Research Institute, established in 1946 at the Pawhuska, Oklahoma, experiment station, became an excellent example of the expanded service.<sup>64</sup> In 1948, Dean Clarence McElroy became chief administrator of a natural outgrowth of such experimentation, the new School of Veterinary Medicine.<sup>65</sup>

As professional studies amplified so did Graduate School degree offerings.<sup>66</sup> During the war, Dean McIntosh installed a doctoral program in education,<sup>67</sup> and the opening of a veterinary medicine school brought yet another doctoral offering. However, the North Central Association throughout the Forties, doggedly questioned A. & M.'s comparatively low number of graduate faculty doctorates compared to other research institutions.<sup>68</sup> In attempt to upgrade the standards of the Graduate School

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<sup>63</sup> Caldwell, "The Oklahoma A. & M. College."

<sup>64</sup> Gilmore, "A Historical Study," p. 184.

<sup>65</sup> Ray D. Bostwick, "Dr. Bennett Era Brings Huge Expansion," The O'Collegian (June 6, 1950), p. 6; Bulletin: The Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College (Stillwater, 1951) p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> "Degrees Granted by Oklahoma A. & M. College" (August 31, 1951), Graduate School-Office of the Dean 1946-1953, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>67</sup> D. C. McIntosh, "Letter to Henry G. Bennett" (November 28, 1944), Graduate School-Office of the Dean 1946-1953, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>68</sup> A series of letters during the late forties on the subject of North Central evaluations of Oklahoma A. & M. in North Central Association 1934-1949, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

in 1946, the College Council voted to require the Graduate Record Examination as an entrance requirement.<sup>69</sup>

Nora Talbot's Home Economics Division also expanded during the decade. By 1950, it had a new building which housed a plethora of research efforts in textiles and frozen foods, to name a few. Many of Talbot's graduates attracted enough national acclaim to obtain employment as nutrition experts and dieticians for the United States Department of Agriculture for large hospitals throughout the country.<sup>70</sup>

Extension activities also multiplied, and Bennett established a college radio station from which he advertised the achievements.<sup>71</sup> Some of the new developments occurred in the Division of College Extension (the former Correspondence School) under "Durant Gang" associate Roy Tompkins.<sup>72</sup> The division supplied interested parties throughout the state with audio-visual equipment, films and recordings in addition to offering off-campus speakers and courses in specialized fields such as photography.<sup>73</sup> The Extension Division under Dean Brown supervised expanding state and federally funded outreach organizations like the Farm and Home Administration, the Public Health Service, and the Rural

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<sup>69</sup>"Minutes of the College Council" (July 26, 1946) College Council Minutes, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater). The following source indicated that the college did make some improvements for the faculty. In 1946 the A. & M. Board of Regents approved a new policy constructing specific pay scales added to promotion and retirement benefits: "Minutes of the Board of Regents" (April 6, 1946), Board of Regents Minutes, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>70</sup>Tulsa World (October 15, 1950), magazine section, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Regents" (August 3, 1945), A. & M. Board of Regents Minutes, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>72</sup>Muri Rogers, Personal interview, Stillwater (July 26, 1979).

<sup>73</sup>Bulletin: Oklahoma A. & M. College (Stillwater, 1941), p. 77.

Electrification Administration. Brown and his staff worked consistently with farm and livestock owner cooperatives, the National Farmers Union, Farm Bureau, and National Grange, added to the Oklahoma Cotton Farmers' Association, Livestock Farmers' Association and Cooperative Council which considered problems effecting co-operatives and sponsored cooperative activities. Moreover, the Extension Division continued to sponsor youth groups such as 4-H.<sup>74</sup>

One well publicized activity was the Greener Pastures contest which a state radio station, KVOO, advertised. All seventy-seven Oklahoma counties participated by following the college's program of soil analysis and cultivation techniques needed to grow richer grass lands. The results were good, for one county alone produced over 1,525 extra pounds of beef per farm.<sup>75</sup>

In accordance with Bennett's progressive philosophy, state economic planning at A. & M. remained rather decentralized. For example, county agents and other A. & M. staff met with each county in order to plan for its own development.<sup>76</sup> Commerce Division Head Raymond Thomas espoused similar theories in a 1949 article which stated that the federal government had gone far beyond its intentions merely to stimulate the economy in the thirties. Thomas feared that a powerful national bureaucracy was the harbinger of fascism or communism in America. Thus, he called for a

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<sup>74</sup> Caldwell, "Oklahoma A. & M. College;" Organization for European Economic Co-operation, Report of a Working Party of European Experts, pp. 159-167.

<sup>75</sup> "This is the KVOO Farm Service Department," Anniversary Issue (L941-1951), pp. 8-9, Scrapbook, Folder, Box #4, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>76</sup> Organization for European Economic Co-operation, Report of a Working Party of Experts, pp. 164-165.

doubling of property taxes in Oklahoma and elsewhere, to bolster state and local treasuries, thereby offsetting federal power.<sup>77</sup>

Like Thomas, Bennett preferred (as he always had) decentralized social and economic, as opposed to national planning. During the forties, the college president added another to his traditional progressive reasons for spurning a strong central government. The potential for suppression of not only economic individualism, but of personal liberties was at stake in mid-century America.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, as always, he complimented Oklahoma farmers on their self-help efforts. Bennett told a group that they were once, "a vast aggregation of individualists distrustful of each other and of their urban fellows" but were now united.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, they had solved many of their problems by educating themselves in management and marketing techniques and pushing for world trade, Bennett concluded.<sup>80</sup>

During the late 1940's and early 1950's, many Oklahomans also banded together not to promote change but to preserve a traditional social order. Like other Americans, some Sooners forgot that their country had just fought a war to preserve democracy and freedom of thought, not to squelch it. In 1948, Milt Phillips, editor of a Seminole, Oklahoma newspaper, held mock loyalty hearings, while that same year the State

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<sup>77</sup> Raymond D. Thomas, "Government's Expanding Role," The A. & M. College Magazine 21 (November, 1949), pp. 8-10.

<sup>78</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "As the Twig is Bent," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>79</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, "A Mid-Century Look" (Washington, D. C., 1950), p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.



Legislature passed into law a national fidelity oath for Oklahoma employees.<sup>81</sup> This act led to legislative visits at both the university and A. & M. campuses. Whether or not Bennett opposed this action was unclear, for he publicly stated, "I shall be pleased to give my full cooperation, and my associates . . . will be happy to furnish all possible assistance."<sup>82</sup> In 1951, a second state loyalty oath law stirred the nation's attention when eight of the A. & M. instructors refused to swear their allegiance to the federal government. The college board fired the professors, who immediately sued A. & M. Oklahoma courts upheld the college action, but in 1952, the United States Supreme Court reversed the decision,<sup>83</sup> though none of the faculty returned to their jobs.<sup>84</sup>

Oklahoma A. & M. attracted pejorative public notice over other attempts to maintain social conformity. Although three of the twelve major United States Supreme Court cases dealing with racial segregation in higher education originated at Oklahoma University, A. & M.'s racism received

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<sup>81</sup>James Arthur Robinson, "Loyalty Investigations and Legislation in Oklahoma" (Unpub. M.A. thesis, The University of Oklahoma, 1955), pp. 86-90.

<sup>82</sup>The O'Collegian (February 18, 1949), p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 131; Loyalty Oaths 1949-1953, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater); Vierman v. Updegraff, 344 US 183 (1952).

<sup>84</sup>Personal communication with Lloyd Wallisch, Stillwater (July 15, 1979). Wallisch has done extensive research on the Oklahoma loyalty oath cases.

its share of ballyhoo.<sup>85</sup> During the late forties, the A. & M. regents clearly stated its position on integration by blocking the attempted registration of two black youngsters.<sup>86</sup> More spectacularly, A. & M. received Life Magazine coverage when, in a 1950 Fall intercollegiate football game against Drake University, an A. & M. player crossed the field and struck Drake's black player Johnny Bright, breaking his jaw in several places. Bennett, who was on leave throughout 1951, got a few hundred letters from coaches, business people and other citizens all over the country, decrying the act and expressing shock that the A. & M. athlete was not severely punished.<sup>87</sup>

Especially in Bennett's absence, A. & M. Board President Stuart was instrumental in casting the college attitude toward blacks. Even so, the college president had upon occasion privately expressed racist views and was on record as a segregation advocate.<sup>88</sup> In 1933, he asked federal

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<sup>85</sup>The three Oklahoma cases were: Spiuel v. Board of Regents 333 US 631, 1948; Fisher v. Hurst, Chief Justice, et al. 33 US 147, 1948; McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents 339 US 637, 1950. The other national cases were: Plessy v. Ferguson 163 US 537, 1896; Cumming v. County Board of Education 175 US 528, 1899; Gong Lum, et al. v. Rice, et al. 275 US 78, 1927; Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University of Missouri, et al. 305 US 337, 1938; Sweatt v. Painter 339 US 629, 1950; Brown, et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, et al. 374 US 483, 1954; Bolling, et al. v. Sharpe, et al. 347 US 497, 1954; Tureaud v. Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, et al. 347 US 971, 1943; Marco Defunis, et al. v. Charles Odegaard, President of the University of Washington 94 SC Rptr. 1704, 1974; Regents of the University of California v. Allan Bakke US 57 L Ed 2nd 750, 1978.

<sup>86</sup>Bertha Bishop Schiefelbusch, "Letter to R. T. Stuart" (April 9, 1949), Negroes and College Education 1948-1949, Folder, Box #6, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>87</sup>Johnny Bright Case-Reactions 1951, 1 & 2 and Johnny Bright Case-Reactions 1951-1953, Folders, Box #2, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>88</sup>Rulon, Oklahoma State University, pp. 239-240.

authorities to remove the black members of the CCC camp, and only after several petitioned were they allowed to remain, holding jobs like dishwasher and janitor.<sup>89</sup>

Several books by southern author Thomas Nelson Page further substantiated Bennett's segregationist philosophy. The college president's personal library included works like The Negro: The Southerner's Problem which Page personally autographed for Bennett. Here the author outlined a familiar view that the average black man instinctively lusted after white women. Page concluded that not even the southern lynchings had been a deterrent for the ravaging of innocent females. Only proper socialization and separation of the races would solve the problem.<sup>90</sup>

In spite of Bennett's traditionalism, he was, for many years, one of the most respected political-educational leaders for many black Oklahoma educators, as evidenced by S. C. Counter's desire to stand behind Bennett's favorite candidates for public office in 1938. Moreover, the college president's close associate, Governor Kerr, received most of the black votes when running for Governor in 1942.<sup>91</sup> Largely alienated from the reigns of state law and policy making, Oklahoma blacks backed men such

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<sup>89</sup> A series of letters and documents in: Civilian Conservation Corps-Stillwater 1933-1935, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater). Also during the thirties, Oklahoma Catholic higher educators like Carl J. Bloomfield accused Bennett and other "school bloc" members like Superintendent Crable, Board of Agriculture President Scott, and Southeastern State Teachers College President H. Vance Posey of refusing to hire Catholics. For reference to religious prejudice see Carl J. Bloomfield, "Letter to Bishop Kelly" (September 22, 1937), and Bishop Kelly, "Letter to Carl J. Bloomfield" (September 27, 1937), Miscellaneous B, Folder, General Correspondence for 1936-1937, Archives of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (Oklahoma City).

<sup>90</sup> Henry Garland Bennett, Personal Library, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>91</sup> Hawks, Personal interview.

as Kerr and Bennett. At least the white progressives did not use southern racism to divert public attention away from crucial political issues, as did southern demagogic politicians.<sup>92</sup>

Though A. & M. was not available to black minority youth, growing numbers of young people, including Indian students, took advantage of the curriculum innovations of the Bennett era.<sup>93</sup> In 1950, the campus enrolled 1,350 students, and the college president had made certain that physical plant growth accompanied the new A. & M.<sup>94</sup> At mid-century Bennett had almost completed his Twenty-Five Year Plan and was formulating another for the years to come.<sup>95</sup> Major achievements were the Home Economics building, Veterinary Medical Center and two new dormitories, one of which the A. & M. board named for Bennett.<sup>96</sup> However, the

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<sup>92</sup> Significantly, Bennett's views were not inconsistent with turn of the century progressives like Woodrow Wilson. While President, Wilson did nothing to change, in fact in some cases contributed to, the second class status of black Americans. Although the Truman Administration integrated the armed services during the Korean War, Bennett was dead before the nation's integrationists finally forced their beliefs into the mainstream of liberal philosophy, as symbolized by the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education United States Supreme Court decision. For a reference to Wilson's racial position see: Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York, 1954), pp. 64-66.

<sup>93</sup> A. C. Monahan, "Letter to Dr. H. G. Bennett" (January 19, 1940) and Henry G. Bennett, "Letter to A. C. Monahan" (January 23, 1940), Student Employment 2nd Semester 1940, Folder, Box #3, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>94</sup> Weldon Barnes, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 14, 1979); Lohmann, Personal interview; Jones, Personal interview. The longevity of Bennett's tenure as college president made many of his long-range plans and accomplishments possible.

<sup>95</sup> "Fine Housing for Oklahoma Boys and Girls," The A. & M. College Magazine 21 (March, 1950), p. 9; New York Herald Tribune (January 1, 1950), sec. 2, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.; "A Glimpse of A. & M. Today," The A. & M. College Magazine 20 (May, 1949), p. 17; Oklahoma City Times (August 9, 1950), p. 10.

Student Union completed in 1951 and the Edmon Low Library which underwent construction that same year were his crowning structural feats, because their inceptions illustrated Bennett's willingness to gamble and dream.

After the war, Bennett sent Lewie Sanderson to Purdue University to study what was then the only student union of its kind in the country. The Purdie Building, like the one subsequently erected at Oklahoma A. & M., contained shops, offices, a hotel, several restaurants and banquet rooms. In the absence of New Deal matching funds and with the unpredictability of state legislative appropriations, Bennett's use of building bonds was an excellent manner in which to fund such an ambitious project.<sup>97</sup> The college president and A. & M. Board Chairman Stuart managed to sell approximately \$5,000,000 worth of bonds, largely to eastern investors.<sup>98</sup>

Bennett had problems placing the library in the center of campus because Stillwater's Washington Street ran through the building site. During an Oklahoma State Supreme Court battle for jurisdiction over the avenue, Bennett personally chastised his opposition (largely Washington Street merchants) reminding them that the college had made their business prosper; yet, they reciprocated by standing in the path of progress.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "Beautification. . . . That's for Aggies" The A. & M. College Magazine 22 (June, 1951), p. 24; Jones, Personal interview; Louie Sanderson, Personal interview, Stillwater (February 21, 1979).

<sup>98</sup> Sanderson, Personal interview; Rogers, Personal interview; Rulon Oklahoma State University, p. 274.

<sup>99</sup> Babb, Personal interview; R. T. Stuart v. W. S. King et al. 203 OK 23, 1950.

The college won the right to close the part of Washington Street which ran through campus, and plans to build the library resumed.<sup>100</sup> However, at the ground breaking ceremony, as he envisioned the future physical plant, it dawned on Bennett that future A. & M. college leaders could never augment the structure, positioned as it would be between two other buildings. Although Bennett did not change the central location, several days later he had the site moved south far enough to allow for future additions.<sup>101</sup> The A. & M. Board eventually approved construction of library wings, but Bennett never even saw the first finished product. However, he left his mark in the several fireplaces which adorned the study and conference rooms.

A tranquilizing activity for the college president had been to poke slowly and deliberately at a smoldering fire, while he visited with employees or silently planned for the future.<sup>102</sup> Increasingly, Bennett's thoughts were of international cooperation and economic change. As early as 1939, he had predicted that Oklahoma A. & M. would

become the center of . . . world agricultural leadership [by forming] an international congress [where] authorities . . . would come . . . from Scotland, . . . Germany, . . . France, . . . Egypt, yes even . . . Russia [to] discuss the outstanding problems of agriculture throughout the world.<sup>103</sup>

In 1950, he elaborated further that freedom came only, "when people learn the art and science of living together. . . . Let us continue to believe

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Lohmann, Personal interview; Rogers, Personal interview.

<sup>102</sup>Jones, Personal interview.

<sup>103</sup>Bennett, "The Oklahoma A. & M. College Faces the Future," The Speeches of Henry Garland Bennett, Box #5, Special Collections (Stillwater).

in the infinite perfectibility of man, let us have faith in the agencies of education and human cooperation."<sup>104</sup> Unlike many, during the last few years of his life, Bennett got the chance to implement many of his world visions.

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<sup>104</sup>Bennett, "A Mid-Century Look," p. 7-8.

## CHAPTER VII

### OKLAHOMA'S RURAL SCION AS A FOREIGN

#### DIPLOMAT, 1931-1951

A combination of talent and political connections catapulted Bennett into United States diplomatic service, giving him an opportunity to vindicate former President Wilson's ideal of political self-determination for all countries.<sup>1</sup> Bennett's experiences rekindled all of the progressive ideals which he believed were necessary elements for a country's social progress, and the college president's foreign involvements brought a new era of overseas extension work and acceptance of international students at Oklahoma A. & M.

Bennett's career climaxed with his appointment by President Truman to direct Point Four. As a United States technical assistance program, it cooperated with the farmers, merchants, and government officials of impoverished Third World nations which in 1950 had not been swept behind the communist Iron Curtain. Point Four was an extension of Truman's foreign policy commitment to contain the spread of communism in Eastern Europe, Asia and other corners of the world. Yet, Bennett maintained

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York, 1963), pp. 81-144. President Wilson violated his commitment to non-intervention and anti-imperialism, especially with regard to Central and South America. Yet, in his writings, Bennett ignored his hero's ironic behavior and concentrated on Wilson's philosophy and League of Nations creation.



that destitute countries would embrace democracy only when they could associate it with prosperity. Consequently, Bennett reapplied his same progressive theory that pecuniary and subsequent social benefits from land-grant education could replace availability of land for each world, as well as for each United States citizen.

#### Bennett's Early International Activities

Arkansas United States Senator Clinton Anderson, whom Bennett had met at the 1931 Rotarian International Conference in Austria, proved to be one of the first political connections needed to thrust Bennett into the national lime-light.<sup>2</sup> In 1945, when Truman appointed Anderson Secretary of Agriculture, the new cabinet member turned to Bennett for advice and counsel.<sup>3</sup> Also that year, Anderson chose Bennett as the only land-grant college president delegate to the United National Food and Agricultural Conference in Quebec, Canada. There Bennett insisted, as he always had done, that each country should employ the land-grant college concept as a training center preparing and inspiring citizens for its future agricultural and industrial growth.<sup>4</sup>

His next assignment came from Richard C. O'Brien, Chief of the Overseas Branch of the Department of the Army, who hired Bennett to survey and reframe the entire educational system of West Germany, Bavaria,

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<sup>2</sup>Henry Bennett, Jr., Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 15, 1979); Randall Jones, Personal interview (March 1, 1979).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Philip Reed Rulon, "Henry Garland Bennett: The Father of the 'Great Adventure' in University-Contracts Abroad," The Red River Valley Historical Review 2 (Summer, 1975), pp. 257.

Holland, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, and France.<sup>5</sup> Bennet was impressed with the peoples of many of these countries--their industry and determination to survive and commended his co-workers in Germany, whenever he detected progressive educational ideas.<sup>6</sup> Yet mainly the educator found many nations regrettably traditional. By 1949, he grieved that the German universities were

in the hands of the professors again. . . . There is little interest in applied knowledge . . . and the technical schools, agricultural colleges . . . lack prestige. The universities . . . once more are for the scholarly, [and] they appear to be as remote from the contemporary scene as an . . . ivy tower or ivory laboratory could be.

Of Bavarians, Bennett observed that, "the nation which let its European neighbors if not the world in science and invention [keeps] agriculture . . . in medieval primitiveness."<sup>8</sup> He believed that archaic agrarian conditions further entrenched anti-democratic and anti-individualistic Germanic doctrines like, "the myth of the master race [and] the superiority among Caucasians of the elite over peasants and workers."<sup>9</sup>

Bennett's repugnance for the lack of social progress in the areas which he assessed invigorated his paternalism. Like Wilson, who claimed

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>6</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "Dairy," Trip to Europe (Fall, 1949) #2, Folder, Box #2, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>7</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "We Must Win The Race; A Report on Europe," Trip to Europe (Fall, 1949), #3, Folder, Box #2, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

self-determinism for foreign countries but said of Mexico that he would, "not recognize a government of butchers,"<sup>10</sup> Bennett claimed that education alone was not enough to rehabilitate lands infected with oppressive social and political values. In a speech summing up his advisory experience, the educator intoned that the German culture must be forcefully restrained from ever adopting the suppressive reactionary attitudes which had destroyed fragile hopes for democracy before the Second World War.<sup>11</sup>

Despite his momentary hostility toward regressive elitism, Bennett's usual approach to restructuring the world was through reason. He relied mainly, as he had in Oklahoma, on the land-grant college education's social, economic and political reform capabilities. He emphasized the significance of agricultural higher education on "underdeveloped" nations, employing especially agricultural education. In 1951, Bennett said that his most important concern as a United States emissary to Third World nations was an:

. . . interest in strengthening the independence of nations and the freedom of individuals. . . . But how, he asked, can the practice of self-government grow or the exercise of personal freedom have much meaning where hunger, disease and ignorance hold men captive?<sup>12</sup>

Due in part to Bennett's burgeoning international reputation, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia invited him to visit the country in 1950, again as an educational advisor. There Bennett and Selassie made

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Woodrow Wilson, quoted in Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917, (New York, 1954), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "We Must Win the Peace."

<sup>13</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "The Maturing Police," Annals (November, 1951), Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

plans for Oklahoma A. & M. to assist Ethiopia in erecting and running a land-grant college. Bennett died before the scheme became a reality; however, A. & M.'s Randall Klemme and Luther Brannon eventually directed the program.<sup>13</sup>

Bennett's activities prompted the Oklahoma delegation in Washington, D.C., to seek for him a permanent federal role. The group was unable to establish the college president's membership in the National Science Foundation. However, the effort symbolized Bennett's strength with Oklahoma politicians, for even former enemy Dixie Gilmer, a United States Congressman beginning in 1949, signed the endorsement letter to President Truman.<sup>14</sup> Despite the delegation's failure, a much bigger opportunity for Bennett was in the making.

#### Point Four was Born

In 1949, Benjamin Hardy, a mid-level federal State Department official, violated the chain of command and took his idea for an American technical-educational assistance program in pre-industrialized countries to George Elsey, a Truman aide. Another presidential advisor, Clark Clifford, along with Elsey suggested the concept to the President who incorporated it into his 1949 inaugural address. Largely due to the nation's fear of the United Soviet Socialist Republic (its atomic weapons

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<sup>13</sup>Rulon, "Henry Garland Bennett," pp. 259-261, 267-272. Bill Abbott, Personal interview (August 15, 1979).

<sup>14</sup>Matthew J. Connelly, Secretary to the President, "Letter to Mike Monroney," 192-E-Endorsements-A-C, Folder, Box #126, The Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence); Directory of Oklahoma, 1979 (Oklahoma City, 1979), p. 585.

and promise to destroy the United States) Congress appropriated \$30,000,000 for the new Point Four budget in 1950.<sup>15</sup>

Truman's next task was to hire a director, and for counsel on the matter, the President relied heavily on Senator Robert S. Kerr. Truman's indebtedness to the senator dated back to 1944 when Kerr (then the National Democratic Committeeman) sounded an intrepid keynote address at the National Democratic Convention. He and Bennett had authored the document at Kerr's Lake Pelican, Minnesota vacation retreat.<sup>16</sup> The talk was so stirring that several state delegations began lobbying for Kerr as the party's vice-presidential nominee. The Oklahoman did not vie for the national position, but instead secured the Oklahoma delegation's votes for Truman. Kerr also kept the Democrats beholden to him by giving countless party speeches all over the country.<sup>17</sup> Thus, his recommendation that President Truman name Bennett as Head of Point Four carried considerable weight.<sup>18</sup>

Apparently, Truman aides also supported Bennett for professional reasons, as reflected in a memo emphasizing Bennett's special qualifications for the job.

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<sup>15</sup>Richard D. McKinzie and Theodore A. Wilson, "The Helping Hand," American History Illustrated 24 (December, 1972), pp. 34-37.

<sup>16</sup>Bill Kerr, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 6, 1979); Rex Hawks, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 30, 1979); Burl Hays, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (August 27, 1979); Russel Babb, Personal interview (August 13, 1979); Anne Hodges Morgan, Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years (Oklahoma, 1977), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-26.

<sup>18</sup>Hawks, Personal interview; Hays, Personal interview.

[Bennett] enjoys the reputation of being an outstanding college president and is regarded as the motivating power back of the unusual growth of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College during the twenty-two years under his leadership. He is adept at handling political situations which might influence the . . . programs for which he is responsible.<sup>19</sup>

The ability to maneuver in a political environment apparently impressed Truman who had himself depended on the Pendergast political machine in Kansas City for support during his Missouri public service career.<sup>20</sup>

In the winter of 1950, the President offered the directorship to Bennett, who readily accepted. However, the college president convinced the A. & M. board not to replace him but grant a leave of absence instead.<sup>21</sup> Although Vice-Presidents Oliver S. Willham, Randall Klemme and Philip Donnel ran the college in Bennett's absence, he remained involved with Oklahoma higher education and A. & M. The new federal bureaucrat flew home on several occasions to give speeches, visit the college and see Vera Bennett, who continued to occupy their campus residence.<sup>22</sup> Keeping in touch with college policy making, he advised E. T. Dunlap, a young southeastern Oklahoma educator to accept a job as President of Eastern

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<sup>19</sup>"Memorandum for the President" (November 14, 1950), 20-U-Endorsements Miscellaneous, Folder, Box #126, The Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>20</sup>Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession (Baltimore, 1966), pp. 15-16, 18-32. Truman relied on the Kansas City Pendergast Democratic machine to win his first political race for a Missouri county judgeship and depended on Pendergast power for years. While President of the United States, Truman even attended the funeral of Tom Pendergrast, who died an ex-convict and a broken man.

<sup>21</sup>"Bennett to Direct Point Four," The A. & M. College Magazine 22 (December, 1950), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Babb, Personal interview; Weldon Barnes, Personal interview, Stillwater (March 14, 1979).

Oklahoma State Teachers College in Wilburton, Oklahoma.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the state System for Higher Education still under Chancellor Mel A. Nash, promised to make Bennett Nash's successor, after he completed his term as the Director of the Point Four Program.<sup>24</sup>

#### Bennett's Progressivism Shone Through Point Four

Bennett's continued state involvements apparently did not detract from his new federal job. Though death ended his leadership after only one year, he had given scores of speeches, written articles and conducted radio broadcasts.<sup>25</sup> Always, he couched the Third World's struggle in Turner-like prose, because similar to late nineteenth-century Americans, other peoples all over the world faced the challenge of getting maximum production from limited amounts of land.<sup>26</sup>

Bennett became a frequent speaker at college and university association meetings and seminars, similar to his discussion on world land tenure problems held at Wisconsin University. Here, he defined the Point Four mission as placing, "major emphasis on agriculture, [because] . . . land is the primary source of all material life on this

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<sup>23</sup>E. T. Dunlap, Personal interview, Oklahoma City (September 5, 1979).

<sup>24</sup>Babb, Personal interview.

<sup>25</sup>Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>26</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "The Great Basic Hope"; Henry G. Bennett, "Remarks at the American Society for Engineering Education," and Henry G. Bennett, "Point 4: A Better World in the Making," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1 The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

earth."<sup>27</sup> He retold the familiar American pioneer tale and asserted his belief that, once, through property ownership one could achieve self-reliance. Thus, land shortages in the late nineteenth century prompted social critics such as author Henry George to propose a single tax on land, so that all Americans could benefit from the earth's bounty. Not only the United States, Bennett added, but every country owed its people, "access to . . . knowledge and techniques" which benefitted the individual and his society.<sup>28</sup> In other talks, Bennett insisted that Point Four would convince Third World nations through cooperation and brotherhood that American methods of increasing farming skills through science and technology paved the way toward economic independence. This job was essential, he maintained, because, "people of the less developed countries are hungry for land," and the communist doctrine of collective property ownership, "has a magic sound to destitute people."<sup>29</sup>

Just as John Dewey had predicted that the United States could not become democratic in the absence of economic opportunity, Bennett believed the same was true in other lands. The director once declared he was not interested

in strengthening the independence of nations and the freedom of individuals . . . but how [he asked] can the practice of self-government grow or the exercise of personal freedom have

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<sup>27</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "Land and Independence--America's Experience," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "The Human Side of Point 4," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).



much meaning where hunger, disease and ignorance hold man captive?<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, he shunned massive American investment abroad which produced huge factories that bestowed countries with nothing, took valuable resources and used up foreign labor. Bennett penned that

even if factories were to spring up in the underdeveloped areas like mushrooms we would not see an end to mass misery, because there would still be mass hunger.<sup>31</sup>

To create lands of plenty, Bennett hired many United States land-grant college engineering, agricultural and home economics professors both to administer his operation and to perform field work.<sup>32</sup> Point Four was active in thirty-six countries, composing over one-half of the sixty so called "free world" nations in Asia, South America and Africa, such as Indonesia, Brazil and Libya.<sup>33</sup> The agency made contractual agreements to build dams, hospitals, schools or other public facilities in addition to exposing agrarians to efficient farming practices. An integral part of these pacts was that both the United States and the recipient of its

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<sup>30</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "The Maturing of a Policy."

<sup>31</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Address," Land Grant Colleges Association, Houston (November 12, 1951), Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>32</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Remarks at the American Society for Engineering Education"; Henry G. Bennett, "A Better World In the Making"; Henry G. Bennett, "The Point 4 Program and the Negro Land Grant Colleges," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>33</sup>"Point IV: Hope Not Charity," Pathfinder (July 11, 1951), p. 19, Scrapbook, Folder, Box #6, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence). "'Big Brother' to a Free World," The A. M. College Magazine 23 (September, 1951) p. 8. At a National Social Welfare assembly in Madison, Wisconsin, Bennett questioned whether we could call any impoverished nation, "free."

aid agreed to devote government personnel and funds to each Point Four proposal. One of the many examples was the joint effort of both American and Egyptian technicians who improved irrigation and dam constructions in Egypt.<sup>34</sup>

Bennett stressed to his Point Four associates that the entire program's goal of fostering self-help would be wasted if his people did not live and work directly with a nation's citizens.<sup>35</sup> "You cannot say, 'Listen to me; . . . [rather] 'let's try this . . . together; it has worked [before],'" he explained.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the American professionals encouraged the development of foreign agrarian cooperatives similar to those which Bennett applauded in Oklahoma. The director pointed out that, "the Indian [of India] cooperative helped [countrymen] . . . buy ploughs, [and] . . . rent \$17 threshers," just as Americans made similar economical purchases, only on a larger scale.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly after the Truman administration launched Point Four, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities wrote the President to offer assistance. Subsequently, representatives for the federal government met with the educators to approve their offering land-grant

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<sup>34</sup>Ralph S. Yoke, "Egypt--Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," Foreign Agriculture 25 (February, 1951), pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "On Being Partners," National Conference of Supervisors of Home Economics Education Address, Washington (March 21, 1959), Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>36</sup>Henry G. Bennett, quoted in House Foreign Affairs Committee Minutes (July 30, 1951), Henry G. Bennett Speeches Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>37</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "The Maturing of a Policy."

higher education services to augment Point Four contributions in the pre-industrial world.<sup>38</sup> This commitment included the education of foreign nationals in American colleges and universities, and Oklahoma A. & M. became one of the first colleges to do so.<sup>39</sup>

Although Bennett, through Oklahoma A. & M. and Point Four, strove to score for America in its worldwide struggle with totalitarian nations, he maintained that no modern industrialized nation could escape blame for creating the desolate conditions existing in many powerless countries. The dream of eliminating starvation became an obsession with the director, forcing him to make daring public statements in 1951. Bennett asserted that billions of underprivileged people, "have been held captive by hunger, disease and ignorance, [yet they] now have a window into the 20th century, through which to see the evidences of progress in America long denied them."<sup>40</sup> The communist countries such as Russia or the Peoples' Republic of China, Bennett voiced, were proposing to the world an alternative method whereby impoverished nations might prosper. It was America's responsibility to convince emergent nations that democracy, not totalitarianism, would rescue them, he instructed. Yet, he concluded that such a change came only when we removed our contribution to the destructive and prostituting course of Western and now Asian imperialism, which for centuries had raped, subjugated and colonized many helpless

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<sup>38</sup> John A. Hannah, "Land Grant Institutions in Point Four," Foreign Agriculture 25 (February, 1951), pp. 41-43.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.; "He Carries a Torch for A. & M.," The A. & M. College Magazine Memorial Issue 23 (February, 1952), pp. 32-34.

<sup>40</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "Adventure in Education," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

people.<sup>41</sup> Ironically, the director stated that "science and invention," which had perpetuated the competitive economic war for more colonies, natural resources and power could be used through Point Four to head the former pawns toward self-sufficiency.<sup>42</sup>

Characteristically, Bennett attached moralistic motives to the agency's goal of eradicating world diplomatic corruption when he said:

we might . . . bestow all of our goods to feed the poor, and yet it will profit up nothing if we do not possess the true spirit of charity. To fill a man's stomach and take away his pride is to dissipate our resources and lose the friendship we seek to win.<sup>43</sup>

Bennett called the new attitude between America and her less fortunate allies, "moral imperialism." He consciously patterned his program's philosophy and purpose after Wilson, whom Bennett called the "prophet" of world peace and cooperation, who, "will eventually triumph."<sup>44</sup> Bennett demanded that now was the time to build, "upon the rubble and . . . wreckage of the old imperialism . . . a new world system . . . of morality and justice based upon economic efficiency and security."<sup>45</sup>

Bennett also identified roots for his foreign policy in the work of American missionaries. Noting that while he did not view Point Four as a Christianizing agent, the director fervently believed his program symbolized the same "brotherhood of mankind" concept which ministers had

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "The Great Basic Hope," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

preached for decades. Thus, he deduced, "Christian, Moslem and Hindu peoples could be encouraged to work and live in harmony."<sup>46</sup> Because of his attitude, many United States church groups applauded Point Four which won international friends through humanitarian assistance, not military might.<sup>47</sup>

Also part of Bennett's ethical rationale for a United States rescue mission abroad was a need to continue our own American Revolution began in 1776. Like the eighteenth-century North American British colonies, Bennett contended, during his own time, Third World countries were also wrestling with economic and political exploitation.<sup>48</sup> He called upon fellow Americans to support Point Four, an international "workshop of liberty,"<sup>49</sup> and in so doing experience the, "thrill of pioneering and the opportunity to fight against the old enemies of man."<sup>50</sup> Bennett confessed to a group of black American land-grant college educators that their own country had by no means completely fulfilled its social revolution. Yet he claimed that while the United States continued toward a more

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Benjamin Salamon, "A Study in Political Motivation and Administration Techniques" (Unpub. dissertation, London), London School of Economics and Political Science, 1957), p. 55.

<sup>48</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Going to College Handbook," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>49</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Workshop of Liberty," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence). James Madison, one of the chief authors of the United States Constitution, first coined the phrase "workshop of liberty." It referred to the newly-formed country's purpose.

<sup>50</sup>Henry G. Bennett, "Point 4: America Joins a new Revolution," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

equitable society, it could also assist others who were only beginning. After all, he told the black listeners, we all have basically the same hope for prosperity.<sup>51</sup>

#### Point Four Under Attack

Though Bennett's philosophy and program won advocates, they also incurred criticism. Author Henry Hazlitt wrote of the "Point Four illusion," charging that it was just another example of the United States giving money to countries which would never remain loyal to us.<sup>52</sup> Bennett responded to this type of criticism by asking rhetorically before an Oklahoma State Bankers Association meeting:

since when . . . is a welfare program, soundly administered, something to be frightened or ashamed of? The people who automatically tremble or boil at the idea of welfare had better face the facts of life in 1950. They belong to a dead past.<sup>53</sup>

In less authoritarian language the director sagaciously defended Point Four before sceptical antagonistic United States senators who viewed the agency as potentially prodigal. During Bennett's Point Four tenure, United States Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services conducted hearings to investigate passage of the Mutual Security Act of 1951, a bill to continue funding the agency. Testifying before the nation's representatives, Bennett emphasized the simplicity and relatively small amounts of money required to usher farmers who practiced

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<sup>51</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "The Point 4 Program and the Negro Land Grant Colleges;" Henry G. Bennett, "The Great Basic Rope."

<sup>52</sup> Henry Hazlitt, Illusions of Point Four (New York, 1956), pp. 44-48.

<sup>53</sup> Henry G. Bennett, "Point Four and American Security," Henry G. Bennett Speeches, Folder, Box #1, The Papers of Henry G. Bennett, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

Allied with American industrialists, the State Department pushed President Truman to encourage American businessmen to build factories in the countries where Bennett sought to exorcise traditional Yankee imperialism. However, Truman sided with the director who held that dignity and self-reliance would never exist in pre-industrial countries, if they did not control their own futures.<sup>57</sup>

#### Bennett's Demise and Legacy

Bennett's political battles, speaking engagements and writings were only a part of his responsibility as Point Four director. He personally journeyed to each of the countries which eventually signed Point Four compacts, interviewing not only dignitaries but also "the common folk," as Bennett called them, whose lives the programs directly affected. It was for this reason that Bennett, his wife Vera and several other Point Four administrators (including Hardy) boarded an Egyptian airlines flight on December 23, 1951, travelling from Baghdad, Iraq; to Teheran, Iran. A purblinding snow around Teheran forced the pilot to circle the airport several times before he could find the landing strip. Finally, he radioed the control tower that he at last could see the runway. Those were the last words heard from the plane, before it slammed into the side of a mountain near the airport. All passengers and crew perished. When Loy W. Henderson, the United States Ambassador to Iran, discovered the bodies, he found Henry and Vera Bennett, their Bible nearby.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> McKinzie and Wilson, "The Helping Hand," pp. 38-39.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 39-51; McKinzie, "Interview with Loy W. Henderson" (Washington, June 14, 1973), Box #156, The Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

Both the nation and state of Oklahoma mourned Bennett's death. President Truman eulogized that, "in the death of Henry Garland Bennett . . . I have lost a friend, and the American people have lost a great teacher of the simple ideas of cooperation and brotherhood."<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the President reiterated his condolences in a statement before the United States House of Representatives.<sup>60</sup> Truman himself received many sympathetic letters from people, such as William Brooks, President of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, whose life Bennett had touched.<sup>61</sup> National media sources also captured Bennett in eulogies such as one offered in a New York Times editorial. It read:

all those who met [Bennett] were impressed by his imaginative dedication to the big job he had undertaken, but they were equally aware of his shrewd commonsense. His vision [reached] the mountain tops, but his feet were firmly on the ground. It will not be easy to replace him.<sup>62</sup>

Eric Sevareid, a national news broadcaster, depicted Bennett as a man of the soil recalling that:

at first this elderly expert on soils and grasses and fertilizers and plows, this bulky little man with his rumpled suit and his sad expression . . . seemed out of place in Washington, D. C. He didn't use the vocabulary of government agencies; he talked like a modest prophet out of the testaments, and gradually the urbane men and women who worked with him fell under

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<sup>59</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Statement by the President" (December 23, 1951), Bennett, Henry G.--Death 1951-1952, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>60</sup> Congressional Record (Washington, January 9, 1952), p. 31 Bennett, Henry G.--Death 1951-1952, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>61</sup> D. W. Brooks, "Letter to Honorable Harry S. Truman" (December 27, 1951) #5929, Folder, Box #126, The Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

<sup>62</sup> "Editorial," New York Times (December 24, 1951), p. 12.



his spell. . . . For he knew that once there had been cedars in Lebanon and . . . how to make them grow there again.<sup>63</sup>

A plethora of condolences also reached the Oklahoma A. & M. campus,<sup>64</sup> and thousands of people jammed the field house to attend the Bennetts' funeral. Unusual for the time, a blanket of flowers covered the alter area where Senator Kerr stood to pay tribute to his friend whom Kerr called a great agriculturist, educator and "political power."<sup>65</sup>

Oklahoma A. & M. erected a nondenominational Bennett Memorial Chapel, built on the spot where his home had stood.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the college established a foundation in Bennett's name to grant scholarships and other aid to the many foreign students, who had begun attending Oklahoma A. & M. during the late forties as a result of Bennett's eagerness to open the land-grant college doors to other nations.<sup>67</sup> However, even in death his name stirred controversy. Many Stillwater ministers protested the existence of a Bennett Chapel, stating they were not consulted concerning any of the details--only called on to contribute

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<sup>63</sup> Eric Severeid, "Mechanic of Christianity," The A. & M. College Magazine Memorial Issue, pp. 20-21.

<sup>64</sup> Bennett, Henry G.--Death 1951-1952, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater). "Friends Pay Tribute," The A. & M. College Magazine Memorial Issue, pp. 36-37.

<sup>65</sup> Tulsa Daily World (January 11, 1952), pp. 1 & 34.

<sup>66</sup> Jones, Personal interview: Bennett Chapel 1952-1959, Folder, Box #1, Special Collections (Stillwater).

<sup>67</sup> Stillwater News Press (April 13, 1952), pp. 1 & 4. "He Carries A Torch for A. & M.," The A. & M. College Magazine Memorial Issue, pp. 32-34.

money.<sup>68</sup> Also Liberty Preston, one of the Bennett's daughters, stated privately that for some unknown reason, she was not allowed admittance to Bennett's office for several days after his death.<sup>69</sup>

Though in life Bennett had won many of his Oklahoma battles for power and influence, the struggle to mold Point Four in his own image did not survive him. After his death, the American foreign aid policy became exactly what Bennett had spurned. The United States military and private industry increasingly aided countries because of their strategic geographic positions or natural resources, offering very few social improvements in return. Bennett's words of international cooperation, as did Wilson's, remained for yet another generation to give them life.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., (April 28, 1952), pp. 1 & 2.

<sup>69</sup>Richard D. McKinzie, "Letter to Courtney Ann Vaughn" (October 19, 1979).

## CHAPTER VIII

### BENNETT'S PLACE IN HISTORY AND ADMONITIONS FOR TODAY

An analysis of Bennett's professional life involved a study of his progressive philosophy and the political methods which he used to transform theory into practice. Brought up a fundamentalist Protestant and Populist, living among impoverished southerners, it was not surprising that Bennett became a skilled politician, only that he was a progressive one. Several factors had prevented him from becoming another southern demagogue. Rather than absorb the negative aspects of religious fundamentalism--the fear of a wrathful God and suspicion of any unfamiliar political and social views--Bennett adopted a fervent optimism which resembled the old millennialist contention that man was evolving into a perfect being on earth. In addition, though Bennett understood rural isolation and oppression, his parents taught him to fight back by educating himself, rather than blaming other poor people for his misfortune.

Certainly, his graduate experience at Columbia matured and refined Bennett's conviction that society must at least provide each individual alternatives for being productive. Moreover, his progressivism was destined to grow stronger or be crushed when pitted against a predominant attitude in Oklahoma that an absence of state and federal taxation, not burgeoning educational institutions, promoted individual achievement. Finally, the challenge of implementing all his old beliefs within the

developing countries under Point Four auspices proved Bennett's ideas had stood the test of time. Yet, despite his convictions, he was usually able to couch his educational proposals in terms which appealed to Oklahoma's dominately populist-oriented citizenry as well as the state's progressives.

A dissection of the process whereby he marshaled state and national connections to thrust his programs forward and himself into powerful jobs revealed lessons for today's reform-minded higher educationists, who face an era of fiscal depression, plummeting enrollments and declining public confidence. As a public servant, heading what university president and author Clark Kerr called the many faceted multiversity, today's higher educational leaders service a plethora of constituents. To fulfill this task they must be, as Bennett was, in touch with citizens and adroit enough politically to establish and fund programs which address social needs.<sup>1</sup> Other active and prolific higher educators of today have taken exception to casting a university president into the political mold. Author Jaques Barzun in The American University claimed that the president, "needs to be rescued . . . and returned to his post as head of the university."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately Barzun's prototype could never meet today's challenges and survive. Social and economic pressures continue to threaten the autonomous decision-making process on many university campuses and mandate that the president mingle with politicians and

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<sup>1</sup>Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University (New York, 1963), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Jaques Barzun, The American University: How It Runs, Where It is Going (New York, 1968).

citizens.<sup>3</sup> Only then can he win public confidence and the freedom to develop his institution. Moreover, the process of communicating and politizing is continuous. Thus, the successful president will never "rescue" himself from his off-campus role.

Bennett not only worked for many Oklahomans but was astute enough to in turn, employ them, although Bennett was by no means the only college president of his era to do so. President E. O. Holland of the State College of Washington (1916-1944) also employed dedicated alumni to pressure lawmakers into supporting college projects.<sup>4</sup> Both Bennett and Holland directly removed themselves from the spotlight and still accomplished their goals. In his autobiography, President David Kinley of the University of Illinois (1920-1930) succinctly recalled how to win state appropriations and legislative sanctions.

There were two groups who had to be won over; the public at large and the members of the state Legislature, and if the public was convinced . . . the lawmakers would . . . follow.<sup>5</sup>

Bennett, along with other successful presidents, rationalized that compromising to reach partial goals was more important than being an ideological purist who accomplished nothing. Consequently, after a number of years, his educational and political feats had built a pyramid of prestige and power. Every state higher educational reform such as the State

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<sup>3</sup>The Carnegie Commission, The Capitol and the Campus: State Responsibility for Postsecondary Education (New York, 1971), pp. 1-5. This work discusses the encroachment of external pressures, threatening campus independence.

<sup>4</sup>William M. Landon, E. O. Holland and the State College of Washington, 1916-1944 (Pullman, 1958), pp. 279-301.

<sup>5</sup>David Kinley, The Autobiography of David Kinley (Urbana, 1949), p. 112.

System of Higher Education or new state and federal programs, which he administered, presented him with yet another government position. Moreover, each year the institutions under Bennett's influence produced another crop of public school and higher educational administrators, many of whom supported the college president. He was also close to a number of State Superintendents, beginning in 1922 with Nash and extending through his successors John Vaughan and A. L. Crable, until Oliver Hodge took office in 1946.<sup>6</sup> This contact with state office holders helped formulate a progressive commitment in public school and higher educational policy, evidenced by the many conferences and symposiums which he and other state officials addressed.

Many of Bennett's public relations and political activities were profitable for higher education. However, is it ethical for an academic to engage in politics? David Henry, current university president and author of works such as Challenges Past, Challenges Present: An Analysis of American Higher Education Since 1930 provided a frame of reference within which to judge the merits of Bennett's or any other administrator's political involvements.<sup>7</sup> In a commentary following Eulan and Quinley's State Officials and Higher Education: A Survey of the Opinions and Expectations of Policy Makers in Nine States, Henry noted that there exists both productive and destructive politics.<sup>8</sup> When state governmental

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<sup>6</sup> Directory of Oklahoma, 1979 (Oklahoma City, 1979), p. 92; Joe Hubbell, Personal interview (September 6, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> David Henry, Challenges Past, Challenges Present: An Analysis of American Higher Education Since 1930 (San Francisco, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Henry Hienz Eulan and Harold Quinley, State Officials and Higher Education: A Survey of the Opinions and Expectations of Policy Makers in Nine States (New York, 1970), pp. 187-193.

decisions represent the people's will, then public servants have behaved properly, for never can each individual participate in the law-making process. Yet, when a politician's sole interest is to perpetuate his own career, he becomes corrupted. Yet, in Oklahoma, or any other state, diverse constituencies existed. Therefore, both Bennett and his opponents, such as Governor Phillips, believed that the public mandated their actions. For example, Bennett's legislative enemies held that by exposing him as a political machine leader, they were responding to public concern over heightening "school bloc" power and prodigal spending of state and federal tax dollars for, during the early forties, Bennett's self-styled A. & M. Board would never have challenged his entrenchment within the political system. Determining whether Bennett was or his adversaries were practicing respectable politics is obfuscated by the fact that Oklahomans were ideologically inconsistent. Largely conservative, citizens often demanded progressive change.

Bennett's leadership posed yet another dilemma. Can a college president engage in politics without polluting his original intentions with compromise or losing sight that he is working for his institution, not for himself? There is no doubt that Bennett's alliances also bolstered his own ambitions. Superintendent Crable was even willing to use coercion and possible bribery to help publicize the college and further Bennett's attempts at being an author. Furthermore, Bennett's most fortuitous personal boosts occurred partially due to his political friendships. Governor Robertson helped name him president of Southeastern; Governor Holloway assisted in placing him in the Oklahoma A. & M. chief executive role; and Senator Kerr pushed Bennett for Director of Point Four. Furthermore, because of his friendships, the educator's tenures at

Southeastern and A. & M. far exceeded those of his counterparts at the other state colleges or at the university. Bennett may have taken advantage of his influence for personal gain, but he only demonstrated a practice which has been engrained in our culture since the Puritans transplanted the work ethic on the North American continent. We teach our children to work hard but also to take advantage of the "breaks." Hence, in many organizations, we find that personal and institutional success brings power, and the availability of using it for personal advancement is ever-present.

The alienation from one's staff and faculty was another hazard of Bennett's leadership style. Because of his statewide commitments and persistent macro-conception of "institutional" progressivism he often ignored individual faculty needs at Southeastern and Oklahoma A. & M.

It is a matter of record that some of the A. & M. faculty and probably many Southeastern staff members felt frustrated due to their inability to control or even advise the president and College Council on any governance matters. Surely adding to faculty consternation was Bennett's frequent absence from campus. Apparently, when he was in his A. & M. office, paperwork and other college business forced him to remain aloof. Thus, most of his contact with academic personnel was through the inner circle which mechanically operated any institution or agency that Bennett headed. However, more direct contact probably would not have changed Bennett's basic authoritarian leadership style.

When Bennett did attempt to better working conditions or promote enhanced faculty qualifications, his purpose was to improve an institution. Even while President of OEA, his objective was upgrading statewide public education. As a public representative for Southeastern or A. & M., Bennett advertised the existence of and potential for an even more vital



college. In so doing, he needed ammunition such as qualified personnel and relevant programs. Therefore, he had no time for rebellious faculty who only threatened his chances of receiving money and support for higher education.

To compensate for either his inability or refusal to pay top salaries and heighten faculty participation in governance, Bennett nurtured loyalty through Southeastern's and A. & M.'s informal bureaucratic structures, because he was aware that any state college faculty which improved its credentials might eventually undermine the president's solidarity hold on governance.<sup>9</sup> Many of the universities where Bennett's employees took additional graduate work stressed faculty participation in matters such as hiring and firing of instructors.

However, today it would be quite difficult for a majority of the nation's college or university presidents to use the compensatory technique to satisfy the staff's need for professional competence and security. Contemporary higher education faculty, even those working in teachers', state, junior, and community colleges are more unified and polarized against their administrations than those of Bennett's day. However, even thirty years ago he was, as any contemporary president would be, wise enough to hire vice presidents and deans skilled in governance, public relations and academic planning.

Despite his failures, because of his personality and influence, Bennett always seemed to beat the professional politicians at their own statescraft. United with others, he accomplished much more than he ever

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<sup>9</sup> E. Alden Dunham, Colleges of the Forgotten Americans: A Profile of State Colleges and Regional Universities (New York, 1969), pp. 49-50.

could have alone, although he made compromises in the process. However, his Point Four leadership revealed that all of the old progressive contentions still lived within him, and he always trudged forward believing in himself, his ideals and his ability to get things done. Aptly, Christine Hardy, wife of Point Four Assistant Director Benjamin Hardy, once remarked, "Dr. Bennett was . . . full of himself."<sup>10</sup> Yet, he did work tirelessly for others and sowed seeds for today's Oklahoma State University, an outstanding land-grant institution. Moreover, his dedication to the old imperialism's demise and the resurrection of international cooperation left a legacy of hope for today's embattled world.

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<sup>10</sup>Christine Hardy Little, quoted in Richard D. McKinzie, Oral History Interview with Christine Hardy Little: (Arlington, February 23, 1973), Box # Oral History Interview F 124, The Papers of Benjamin Hardy, Harry S. Truman Library (Independence).

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## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Trace your career leading up to and including your relationship with Bennett?
2. Were you and Bennett friends?
3. Characterize Bennett's mother and father.
4. From what kind of socio-economic origins did Bennett hail?
5. What kind of relationship did Bennett have with his schoolmates at Ouachita Baptist College?
6. How would you politically describe Bennett? Was he a democrat, elitist, dreamer or realist?
7. Why did Bennett become a hero for many Oklahomans?
8. Did Bennett have any enemies? Why or why not?
9. How was Bennett able to make allies out of foes?
10. How would you characterize Bennett's public speaking style?
11. Characterize Vera Bennett.
12. What kind of an employer was Bennett?
13. Describe Bennett's administrative style.
14. Who were the "Durant Gang" members, and how did Bennett employ them in administering Oklahoma A. & M. and Southeastern State Teachers College?
15. Describe Bennett's college project funding methods.
16. Did all the state's public school educators look to Bennett as their official leader, while he was OEA president, or did some oppose him. even at this early date?
17. What were Bennett's greatest achievements in higher education?
18. How did Bennett encourage athletic development at Oklahoma A. & M.?

19. What was Bennett's general attitude toward students throughout his career?
20. Was Bennett a good money manager?
21. How and why did Bennett first become involved in Oklahoma politics?
22. What type of assistance did Bennett give to Oklahoma politicians?
23. How did Bennett become such a powerful individual in state political and higher educational decision-making?
24. Characterize Little Dixie's (Southeastern Oklahoma) political constituency during the 1920's, 30's and 40's.
25. Why did Governor Red Phillips eventually "go after" Bennett?
26. How did Bennett fight a political battle?
27. When and why did Bennett's intimate friendship with Governor Robert S. Kerr blossom?
28. Explain to me the source of the primarily conservative reaction against Bennett in Oklahoma during the early 1940's.
29. Was Bennett identified with the New Deal Democratic faction in Oklahoma? Why or why not?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Depending on the specific relationship between Bennett and the person interviewed, any number of these questions might have been omitted. Thus, each session was particularly tailored to the source's area of expertise. Also, many inquiries evoked additional comments on different but related topics.

VITA

Courtney Ann Vaughn

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE POLITICS OF PROGRESSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION: AS SEEN THROUGH  
THE CAREER OF HENRY GARLAND BENNETT

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on January 6, 1949,  
the daughter of Mary Sue Hill and John O. Vaughn.

Education: Graduated from Casady School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma,  
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from University of Kansas, Lawrence Kansas, in 1973; received  
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1975; received Master of Arts degree in History from Oklahoma  
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Professional Experience: Instructor for Topeka High School, 1973-  
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Junior College, 1977-1978; instructor at Strother High School,  
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Professional Associations: Member of Phi Alpha Theta and Kappa  
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the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and  
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