Youth's Greatest Opportunity

Address
By JOHN J. McCLOY
US High Commissioner for Germany

Welcome the opportunity to speak here today. The University of Frankfurt was born in the free atmosphere of a city long famous for its spirit of independence and progressiveness. It was founded by private scientific organizations who worked with voluntary initiative. They gave the university a constitution which made it a stronghold of academic freedom combined with local community responsibility. The close connection with the citizenry which it has maintained ever since has been of inestimable advantage.

The students and faculty of this university have reason to be proud of the liberal academic tradition which flourished here until the Hitler regime came to power. You have equally good reason to be proud of what has happened here since the war. I refer not only to the physical reconstruction which is going on, but to the efforts which the university is making to meet the needs of the modern student in the modern world. Although there is a long way to go, you have made beginnings here which demonstrate an awareness of the need for change in higher education.

Frankfurt has been among the first German universities to establish a chair in Political Science. I understand that some university circles have doubts about Political Science. They do not think it is an independent Fach (study) or that it is a true science. The way to resolve these doubts is by actual performance — by showing that Political Science is both sound and capable of making a significant contribution to modern learning.

One of the great modern needs is a better understanding of human behavior and human relationships. The developments in natural science and technology have made us acutely aware that the constructive use of this great power depends upon a better understanding of man as a social being. The University of Frankfurt has made an outstanding contribution to this need by establishing its Institute for Social Research.

Still another progressive innovation is the arrangement which this university has made with the University of Chicago for the exchange of professors. By establishing this exchange, Frankfurt has shown that it realizes the need for living contact with other institutions of the free world. It is particularly gratifying that this program has had such success because it is a reciprocal one, based on the belief that we can learn from one another.

The Exchanges Program, which the United States has been conducting with Germany, is universally considered to be excellent. But many Americans and Germans feel that it should not be only in one direction, that Americans should come here to gain the understanding of this country which so many Germans are now getting of the United States. I share this view, and hope that the coming years will see a program of bringing my countrymen to Germany to teach and study and work with you. When this happens we will have a program of full Gleichberechtigung (equality) in cultural exchanges.

There is one other point I should like to make in regard to the curriculum, and what I say is not motivated by nationalist feeling. I think the time has come at German universities when courses in American literature, history, economics and philosophy should be considered just as important as courses in Sanskrit and Egyptology!

So far I have talked only of curriculum changes. I should also mention some beginnings which have been made in the field of student-faculty relations. The fact that two student representatives serve on the Senate here when student questions are being discussed may not seem a very spectacular innovation to some people. In my judgment, however, it is of the utmost importance because it shows an awareness of a need for a new form of faculty-student relationship.

A truly modern university realizes that the student is not a passive receptacle to be filled with "wisdom" but an active partner who has a contribution to make to the institution. A living university sees to it that students have an opportunity to participate in a responsible fashion in its affairs. The dignity of the faculty is in no way decreased by such an attitude. Students are quick to detect the difference between the real dignity which comes of maturity and insight and the false dignity which rests only on titles and status.

A leading member of the Bundestag (lower house), who is also a professor, asserted not long ago that the most important reform needed in German universities is in the relationship between students and professors. It seems to me that representation of the students on the Senate is a recognition of the principle on which this new relationship must be based, namely, that students and faculty alike have rights and responsibilities as creative members of a community of learning.

Finally, this occasion itself marks a significant university reform. We are about to lay the cornerstone for a student center and a student dormitory. This is to be welcomed, not only

The accompanying address was delivered by US High Commissioner John J. McCloy at a ceremony on May 25, marking the laying of a cornerstone for a new student home at the University of Frankfurt.
because it helps the housing shortage, but because it marks the beginning of a new form of student living. In these buildings students will not only be able to live together, but a large number can come together there for recreation and discussion. It is my hope that it will provide the conditions for a healthy community of scholars.

Many people deplore today the beginning of the return of the old student corporations with their snobbish and primitive traditions. If these corporations should come back in anything like their prewar form, it will be a dangerous retrogression. The lack of social facilities for students is one of the conditions which makes their return easier. Student centers such as the one being built here, by providing a constructive alternative, strengthen the democratic life of the universities.

The universities of Germany have much to do if they are to regain the great prestige which they had throughout the world when I was a student. One thing is clear: they will not regain that position by trying only to become what they were. The world has changed a great deal, and your universities must be transformed if they are to be meaningful in that world.

I have spoken about some of the things being done at this university which seem to me to be important contributions to modern educational practice in this country. If the spirit behind these beginnings spreads throughout your institution and to other universities, you will be on the way, not back, but forward to new eminence. The University of Frankfurt is to be congratulated for the leadership it has taken in this direction.

I should not like to let this occasion pass without also congratulating the State of Hesse for making these educational opportunities available to you. This is the only state in the Federal Republic where citizens can attend a university without paying tuition. Obviously that does not solve all the problems of assuring access to the university for all qualified students, but it is one barrier the less, and that is all to the good.

Up to this point I have spoken mainly about this university and its curriculum.

I should now like to address myself to its students. From your ranks here and at other institutions of higher learning will come those who will fill a large proportion of the leading positions in the community and in the nation. The fate of the new Germany is inextricably interwoven with your own. Your future will depend on the health and vigor of a democratic Federal Republic just as the Republic will depend upon you.

Despite its domestic and foreign problems, the Federal Republic is becoming daily a more vigorous community. Six years ago this country seemed to be a ruin that could not be salvaged. It was ruined by a dictatorship. Today, the nation is making enormous strides toward recovery, and it is doing so under democratic rules and principles.

The time has come, I think, for Germans, particularly young Germans, to stop debating the question whether or not democracy is the right form of government for the German people. Democracy is the only form of government in which people can develop and live free and without fear. Democracy, with all its debates, can generate more power — physical, psychological, economic and spiritual — than any other form of human society.

The great Italian statesman, Cavour, once said: "Parliamentary government, like other governments, has its inconveniences; yet with its inconveniences, it is better than all others. I may get impatient at certain oppositions, and repel them vigorously; and then, on thinking it over, I congratulate myself on these oppositions because they force me to explain my ideas better and to redouble my efforts to win over public opinion. Believe me, the worst of Chambers is still preferable to the most brilliant of antechambers."

Take these words to heart. Remember that the democratic form of government deliberately makes provisions for its own criticism and improvement. Concentrate on improving it; work inside of it and with it, be positive about it. Give up such ideas as "Politik verdirbt den Charakter" (Politics spoils the character). If you think Bonn, is ineffective, ask yourself how it can be made better.

Your apathy toward politics, if you have any, is worse than ineffective in a world in which there are so many dangerous enthusiasms. These can only be met by interest, participation and enthusiasm in the possibilities of constructing a working democratic political and social order.

I know that the German student is having a hard struggle for existence and that he is courageously battling his way through to an education against almost insurmountable financial odds. In the face of low income and high prices he can scarcely make ends meet. But these difficulties are not a complete block to self-development on a broader scale.

What then can a student actually do to play his part in the political life of the Federal Republic? The first thing that can be done, I would say, is for you to make up your mind that something ought to be done. It will not do for you to blame everything on your professor or on the politicians or on the cultural ministers. You too are part of the public and if the public changes its mind, the politicians and the cultural ministers will change their minds, but your own mind has to be changed first. You must be convinced that there is a political responsibility in society which no one in a democracy can avoid.

This is the opposite of neutralism which would seem to be the safest way for the individual. That is of course a delusion; neutralism has led to the disintegration of a democratic society and the end of the individual too. I am sure that you are not looking for the "safe" way. You want to do the right thing, no matter what the cost or how dangerous it appears.

The next step would be, in my estimation, for you to take political life seriously. One cannot be indifferent to the great issues of these days, to the trends leading to a
political and economic integration of Europe, to the Schuman Plan, the question of European Union, to the development of world organization through the United Nations, to the great problems of refugees not only in Germany but throughout the world. It is not enough that these things be "settled" by the decisions and actions of a few statesmen; in fact, they cannot be settled that way.

All of the political intelligence that can be mobilized in the nations of the western world must be brought into play. Professors must play their role, and it is a tribute to the University of Frankfurt that one of its faculty members headed the German delegation to Paris on the Schuman Plan and has now become State Secretary for Foreign Affairs.* Alert students have always been the greatest asset of the professor who takes his civic responsibilities seriously.

YOU STUDENTS CAN of course prepare to play your part. The action taken the other day by the ASTA (General Students Association) of this university to establish a Referat on Problems of European Integration is an example of what students can do. You can join political parties. If the existing ones need reformation, you can aid in that process by working from within rather than simply standing on the sidelines and criticizing. To play that role intelligently requires great preparation. Much of this should be done while you are studying and as a part of your studies.

Let no one think that the studies of the principles and theories of social and political science are something for which there is no time, or which are unsuited to the academic scene. It was your own Friedrich Naumann who warned: "Ist erst einmal die Bildung unpoltisch geworden, dann wird auch die Politik ungebildet" (Once education has become unpolitical, then politics also will become uneducated.) And as for the time, there is always time for that which is important. As I have said before, it is up to you to decide what is important and then make room for it.

Of course you may feel it necessary to resort to imaginative ways of educating your elders, if they are really not giving you the broad liberal education that you need to meet the problems of modern living, if there is too much emphasis on the accumulation of facts and specialized knowledge, then you might be the ones to make this known to the public. You have your publications and you can write letters to the newspapers and to your political leaders.

STUDENTS IN EUROPE have had a lively political interest in the past; one needs to think only of the barricades of 1830 and 1848. It is not necessary today to mount the barricades; there are other ways of participation in the civic affairs of the day. And if it is not possible to get the time even to inform oneself about these problems, then the first requirement is to demand the time and the opportunity to obtain such information.

I wish to make it clear that in suggesting increased student participation and interest in the political life of the Federal Republic I am not recommending that the universities become hotbeds of politics or that the podium should be politicized. The university should and must be a place of learning, of the search after objective truth, a place where men of ideas and good will discuss and learn. What I am asking is that the young man and woman who is studying to become a philosopher or a lawyer, a doctor or a teacher, should at the same time study to become and by practice develop into a good citizen.

I have spoken in a personal vein today, for I feel, as a Frankfurter Mitbürger (fellow citizen), a deep interest in this university and through it a deep interest in all German universities. In our limited way we have tried to help the German schools and universities in the past year help enlarge opportunities for German youth. I want to take this opportunity to state that we Americans are eager to help out further — in the exchange of students and professors with the United States and other countries, in helping to provide facilities for common life and experience at German universities. When the time comes to turn over to Frankfurt and other cities some of the buildings we have built for our own staff, I hope it will be possible to earmark a few of the buildings in each of these developments for university student homes or colleges.

AFTER TWO YEARS in Germany I want you to know that one of my great hopes for the future of this country is the young people. I agree with a prominent German professor who recently said that the German students of today, compared with the students of the post-War I era, are more broadminded, international-minded and social-minded.

Democracy can be practiced at all times, including one's time spent as a student. It is strongly to be hoped that the opening of the student house and student center which we are celebrating today will facilitate all forms of democratic student activity. Indeed, I understand that it has already been decided, in accordance with the wishes of the faculty and the students, that this house which we dedicate today will become an international center where the fraternity, the equality and freedom of all peoples shall be expressed.

Some young men come to me and say: "There is no future in Germany for youth. Germany's days are past." To these I say, there never was a period of German history in which there was a greater demand for the development of an energetic and open-minded youth. A youth whose energy is directed toward constructive goals, which does not allow itself to be led around by the nose by demagogues, could help make Germany a great liberal and tolerant community. And the accomplishment of this task may be decisive in resolving the world issues which we face today. No future? You have the opportunity to help create a new community of people's walking in freedom. There has never been such a future for German youth.

* Walter Hallstein.