



Dr. Samuel B. Gould Addressing the Alumni

Dr. Gould is President of the Educational Broadcasting Corporation. He was formerly President of Antioch College, 1954-1958; and Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara, 1959-1962.

Some of his most important speeches have been put together in book form and published under the title KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ENOUGH.

... This brings me to the title of my remarks. Please believe that there is nothing invidious in the phrase "fanning the embers" as it is being used to apply to alumni relations. I would not for a moment want you to think that I consider your life's energies are now burning low, that the fires of your inspiration have now been banked, and that you are reduced to a merely smoldering state. Your achievements as alumni are ample contradiction of any such idea. Furthermore, you all look very healthy and happy. No, I have used this title rather in an effort to call attention to the need on the part of a college, any college, steadily to be about the business of rekindling the intellectual and cultural spark among its alumni.

If education of its students is a primary concern of the college, then continuing education of its alumni is at least a secondary one. And such a concern can be translated into a positive program only when the alumni are receptive to its implications. They must feel an inner need for periodic intellectual refreshment and replenishment, and they must retain or regain some of

Extracts from Dr. Gould's Address *"Fanning the Embers"*

the excitement for learning presumably engendered in them as students; otherwise, their status as college alumni becomes a rather superficial or even empty thing, unworthy of all the effort expended in their behalf by devoted teachers. It is these embers of intellectual curiosity that I should like to see bursting into flame once again. . . .

Surveys made during the past several years by the American Alumni Council and similar organizations reveal the large percentage of college graduates who do not read so much as one book in a year, or who do not become involved in any cultural or civic enterprise whether as spectators or participants. One such survey made in 1956 revealed that only 17 per cent of American adults read books, compared with 31 per cent in Canada, 34 per cent in Australia, and 55 per cent in England; 26 per cent of our college graduates had not read a single book during the preceding year; 9 per cent could not name the author of any one of twelve famous books in English, and 39 per cent could not name more than three; 45 per cent could not name any recently published book.

To me this is as much a commentary upon or a criticism of the college or university as it is of the graduate. In fact, it is even more the college or university which is to blame, for the failure to stimulate and to cultivate worthwhile tastes and patterns of living reflects an institutional weakness. Somewhere along the line important and even timeless ingredients and values have all too often been lost or shunted aside until what remains is questionable as an education for life. Instead it becomes what Reinhold Neibuhr has called "a sophisticated vulgarity." . . .

Now, with the attention of each college drawn more than ever to the almost overwhelming problem of how to provide education adequately for the increasing numbers of undergraduate students, the possibilities for alumni education in the conventional sense become even more remote and unrealistic. The resources of

colleges today whether in faculty, facilities, or finances are being strained to their limits and beyond by the demands created by the larger and larger enrollments in colleges.

It would seem at first glance, therefore, that my appeal at a time like this for a renaissance of alumni intellectual interest is impractical and to no avail. But I am not at all willing to admit this. On the contrary, I would say that a farsighted and concerned alumni group not only could show how new patterns for alumni study might be devised, but at the same time could spur the college itself to re-think its present patterns for the undergraduate in the light of present and future necessities.

Perhaps you have already surmised that I am talking about television as a tool to help bring all this about, and if so, you have surmised correctly.

. . . Some educators have confused the value of the technical tool of television itself with the value of what they see being broadcast daily. They have equated television with unrelenting commercialism, with repetitive and inane comedy, with an inordinate amount of violence, and with hours and hours of superficiality. Recognizing that these programs also educate, even if in a decidedly negative fashion, many in the academic profession have drawn back in horror. Their critical attitude has blinded them to the fact that television occasionally provides magnificent programs of high cultural content as well as superb documentaries and special events coverage. When this happens, more people are reached in an hour than one could normally expect to reach in a period of years.

This may seem to you a wild and outrageous statement, but I can document it. Just to give a few illustrations: when Shakespeare's *Richard II* was presented a few years ago on Hallmark Playhouse, more people saw and heard the broadcast than had attended theatre performances of Shakespeare for the previous three hundred years. When Professor Harvey White of the University of California presented an undergraduate college course in physics on *Continental Classroom* (and this at the ungodly hour of six-thirty in the morning) more people watched the program regularly than the total of all his students in all his classes during his entire teaching career to date which spans more than two decades. To put the case on a more modest and local level, the course in *Russian for Beginners* which we offer on Channel 13 has brought forth a request for course materials from more than seven thousand viewers. Even the strongest opponent of television would have to admit that it would take quite a good-sized classroom to hold these students on any single campus. . . .

Much similar exploration could be initiated in open-circuit television also and for the fulfillment of a variety of purposes. One of the easiest places to start, for example, is with telecourses for alumni, the subject fields chosen according to the wishes of the alumni group itself, the courses offered by the college faculty, and made available not only to Hunter College alumni but to all who have the urge to participate. Here would be the simplest, the most effective, and possibly the least expensive way to "fan the embers" I was speaking about a few minutes ago. This is not the time or place to sketch all the details of this possibility except to indicate that a systematic, academically worthwhile program could be developed without the red tape and clutter of rules about course credit hours and all the rest. It could be adult or continuing education based upon its finest motivation, namely that of learning for the joy of learning and nothing more. It could encompass literature, the arts, the sciences, and world affairs. And it would require no classrooms, no subway or bus rides, no large number of faculty, no registration procedures, no examinations.

From such a beginning in adult education by television spurred by the interest of college alumni could come more confidence on the part of our institutions of higher education in the adaptation of this approach for the undergraduate student also—a more complicated procedure for the latter, perhaps, but none the less possible. It might even lead to an educational television station devoted solely to the needs and requirements of the City University of New York as these needs relate to community colleges, senior colleges, graduate study and general adult education. The future demands that are certain to be made upon the City University make such a station, or at least several hours a week on an existing station, virtually an inevitable step in coping with enormous student bodies and inadequate physical facilities. Especially is this true if one is concerned about having the maximum number of students benefit from the instruction of the most distinguished and ablest faculty members.

On an occasion such as this, I am sure every one of you who are alumni of Hunter College, together with those who are faculty and administration, realize that this College, like all fine colleges and universities, stands as a great bulwark against ignorance and a great hope for the enlightenment of our people. With such realization, it would seem proper that your hearts and minds should be turned toward the expectation of a great mutual adventure, an adventure shared by the College and its alumni, an adventure that binds you together intellectually. . . .