

SECTION 1 - "ONLY THE EDUCATED ARE FREE"

Dr. Chambers' return to higher education, after managing the Ohio family farm for seven years in the 1950s, occurred as higher education entered a period of significant expansion. Many of the issues of the 1960s were related to the influx of students and to institutional growth, both in the number and size of individual institutions. Two of the more controversial issues were centralization v. campus autonomy and public v. private higher education. M. M. Chambers was outspoken on both of these issues. He had abhorrence for bureaucratic and excessive state centralization and control; he prized "efficiency of freedom" for individual institutions.

Consistent with his belief in public higher education and in campus autonomy, Dr. Chambers stood firmly in favor of free public higher education, especially the first two years of undergraduate education, "to all qualified applicants" (EDUCATION SUMMARY, 1966*). He was tolerant of the private sector, and supportive of the constitutional right to choose a private college or university. However, Dr. Chambers was "vehemently opposed to the argument that the public institutions must be compelled to raise their tuition fees to the level of those of the private universities in order to provide 'fair competition'" (Letter to Howard Maxwell, October, 1974).

This "pro-public" posture did not endear M. M. Chambers to those who sided with the Carnegie Commission, the Committee on Economic Development, and other advocates of achieving "balance" between public and private sectors by increasing tuition in the public sector (Letter from Clark Kerr, March, 1965, next section). During the mid 1970s a number of states experienced problems in maintaining their commitment to graduate education, especially at the doctoral level.

* All references are to materials and letters contained in this folder.

Ted Hollander of New York (Letter of October, 1976) and William Arceneaux of Louisiana (Letter of January, 1977) were especially critical of M. M. Chambers' expansionist view of graduate education, but Dr. Chambers replied:

Very familiar are the current arguments that we already have too many educated people; that doctoral graduates cannot get jobs; that we can not afford to pay for so much doctoral education; but, taking the long view, we discount all these assertions . . . the overriding issue seems to be that we are expansionist for doctoral education, while the prevailing policy in Louisiana appears to be reductionist (Emphasis in original, Letter to William Arceneaux, January, 1977).

These strongly articulated views precipitated the comment from some that Dr. Chambers' work "has many aspects of a polemic" (Review by Daniel McHaargen, August, 1962). Another Chambers' work was described (indeed, in Chambers' own words) as a "subjective essay dealing with comprehensive concepts" (John Millet in SCIENCE, 1968). Still others saw M. M. Chambers as the champion of the public sector and as one who had the courage to speak out in favor of public higher education at a time when it was under criticism and attack.

But the issue raising the real ire of M. M. Chambers were the forecasts, prophecies, and predictions so characteristic of the late 1970s and early 1980s of serious enrollment declines in higher education with resulting faculty lay-offs, program terminations, and curtailed services to students. The following remarks by Dr. Chambers to a Virginia professor are instructive:

I am a bit turned off by your phrase 'declining enrollments' in the first sentence of the paper. If I am correct, there has not been any year since World War II in which there was any actual decline if you look at the nationwide scene of all formal education above Grade 12 Nor can I agree with the lugubrious 'self-fulfilling prophecies' of hundreds of speakers and writers of this present decade who look at the slightly declining birth rates that set in about 1962 and thoughtlessly conclude that disastrous declines in higher education enrollments are inevitable, beginning about 1982 I think there is reason to believe there will be no overall decline at all (Emphasis in original, Letter to R. Head, March, 1978).

Working with Dr. Chambers was a privilege and an education for me, despite the brief years of our acquaintance at Illinois State University. Organizing and presenting these pieces of correspondence and other materials was a way for me to give tribute to this giant in American higher education. As my colleague, John McCarthy, and I wrote in the dedication in HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE (1985):

This book is dedicated to M. M. Chambers, whose energy and optimism about higher education are an inspiration to us all.

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