

# TELLURIDE NEWS LETTER

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## PHI BETA KAPPA

(Speech for the Initiates)

By Robert Huffcutt

If we were to look for an intellectual aristocracy in America, I suppose that we should pick Phi Beta Kappa for that honor. In the century and a half of its existence it has become the symbol of academic excellence, and the flower of American scholarship has been found within its ranks.

But an intellectual aristocracy cannot exist in isolation from the rest of society; it is but an integral part of the social milieu. We are but one limb of the social organism, in which the functioning of every part is vital to the life and health of the whole.

Our life and work as scholars is dependent upon the rest of society in two ways:

First, the material necessities for the prosecution of our work are supplied by those who produce, and our work can be destroyed by the withdrawal of that supply. If we hope to enjoy the luxury of our academic pursuits, we must prove by our social contributions that we merit this support.

Secondly, we are dependent upon society for the application of much of the matter-of-fact knowledge and artistic achievement which we produce. Here again it is our responsibility to see to it that the information which we have supplied is directed toward socially desirable ends: that our scientific discoveries are used for bettering the material welfare of the people, not for creating implements of war and destruction; that our social sciences are to promote the human liberties upon which our civilization rests, not merely to justify the status quo; that our literature be directed toward the enlightenment and uplift of humanity, not toward moral degeneration. In short, our task does not end with the exposure of an historical document or the completion of an experiment; it ends only when we have seen our work produce enlightened spirits, better-fed children, more peaceful political relations.

It is right then that in a chaotic  
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## CONCLUSIONS

By Ralph Kleps

In his latest book, Paul de Kruif says that the greatest obstacle to the eradication of certain diseases lies in "the cursed word 'ideal.' For the word 'ideal' in our American language means only one thing: a goal which will never be attained." As a result, he points out, methods which we know to be essential for the preservation of life are classified as typifying an "ideal situation." As such they are considered to be in the realm of the unattainable—a realm so distant that man can cease to struggle toward it and can thus rationalize the shameful continuance of diseases which we have the technical knowledge to control. The central core of Deep Springs and Telluride Association—what we might call the Telluride ideal—has suffered much from the same definition and from contact with the same forces of rationalization.

One would be blind to deny that L. L. Nunn was an idealist of the staunchest sort. The man who envisioned and created the magnificent conception which is embodied in Deep Springs and Telluride Association could have been naught else. The man who devoted all of his worldly achievement and the last precious years of his life to the furtherance of that conception could hardly have doubted the value of dynamic, practical action in promoting his ideal. And it is that conception and that ideal which is the permanent and lasting contribution L. L. made—not the money which provides us with well-appointed quarters and a well-ordered existence. Too many of us tend to forget that fact as we grow ever more complacent in the surroundings which he furnished.

The Telluride ideal may vary—within certain boundaries—but a vigorous ideal it must always remain. L. L. spoke of training a class of public servants devoted to the needs of the country. Those to whom such a concept seems naive or futile have no place in the institutions which he founded. He said that we should train our men toward initiative, re-

sponsibility, and leadership. Those in whom such qualities do not actively manifest themselves are wasting the equipment he left us to work with. He defined our purpose as the education of men in a manner emphasizing the need for unselfish service in uplifting mankind from materialism to idealism. To those cynics whose ability to digest an ideal rises no higher than the "gravy train" concept I say, the world is full of your kind; Deep Springs and Telluride Association should not be also. In writing to the Trustees of Deep Springs, L. L. quoted an address made by a Serbian priest who said: "Action and not knowledge has been always, throughout human history, the principal thing . . . Knowledge for knowledge's sake is nothing but an illusion . . . The eternal question . . . is not: How much knowledge you can possess in your mind, but; How are you going to use your knowledge for your conduct?" In commenting on this passage, L. L. said: "it contains views which I have been trying to express for many years . . . For many years I have been trying to say that knowledge is a dead thing, without character or value except when used, and that then its character and value are determined by the purpose for which it is used." Those who can seriously consider the gathering of matter-of-fact knowledge as a good in itself—without reference to its use—have failed to appreciate the emphasis L. L. intended to put upon the institutions which he founded.

None of his expectations have been met; the Telluride ideal remains unattained. Deep Springs and Telluride Association work very imperfectly, as L. L. himself had occasion to mention. Petty personal bickerings occupy too much of our time. Disillusion with the accepted tenets of our various conventional backgrounds, which is the normal process for a Deep Springer, too often fails to be replaced by any lasting and constructive goal. Complete cynicism

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MAY, 1938

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

After listening to the discussion which has taken place concerning my contribution to the December issue of the *News Letter* I have become somewhat alarmed over the tendency to use Carl Becker's writings as Scripture and to forget the constitution of Telluride Association. My only purpose in prefacing my own remarks with those of Professor Becker was to start off with a clear and concise statement of certain ideas which I believe are contained in the preamble of our constitution. It is my belief that the statement I quoted is true, but I made use of it only as an illustration and not a proof.

I may restate my own convictions briefly as follows. The constitution of Telluride Association states in its preamble that its purpose is "increasing the adoption as the rule of conduct of those truths from which flows individual freedom as a result of self-government in harmony with the Creator." Self-government in harmony with the Creator means to me living in accord with the fundamental facts of our physical and human environment, i. e., matter-of-fact knowledge. Mr. L. L. Nunn used the following quotation to make clear the preamble. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We are not free if we must depend on hunches for our political judgments. As we push back the frontier of the unpredictable, we increase our freedom of action. The purpose of Telluride Association is to foster the acquisition and application of this matter-of-fact knowledge to all aspects of human existence.

This is indeed a general criterion, but, I think, not without significance. We should make the attempt once in a while to see ourselves under the aspect of eternity. But in particular problems matter-of-fact can be a touchstone for separating gold from base metal. It is possible and desirable to inquire how a given member or applicant is increasing the store

of such knowledge or how he is applying it to a practical situation.

This does not mean that the members of Telluride Association should all be scholars in the strict sense; I never said that. It does mean that we should require our members either to add to or to apply such scientific knowledge. My emphasis on the vocation of the scholar and his aloofness arose from a conviction that scholarship and its application are usually two different functions performed by different people, and that it is a mistake to expect otherwise.

I am only too keenly aware of the necessity of making decisions on the basis of value judgments and inadequate information. This does not mean, however, that such a state of affairs is desirable or that we should acquiesce in it. The present lack of scientific information is a problem to be solved if our social maladjustments are to be resolved. If we fail, then we are doomed to follow the paths of other civilizations which have passed into nothingness. That such a search for scientific knowledge about our social environment is beset with great difficulties I readily admit, but the attempt must be made; it is only in such a search that we can ever achieve the "self-government in harmony with the Creator" which is our purpose.

Walter Balderston

During my two years at Cornell Branch the most frequent topics of conversation have been the various problems of Telluride Association. Many members are dissatisfied with the machinery of selection, for both membership and preferment. Cornell Branch can be only so strong as the men who make up its membership, and many of the problems which the Branch faces are results of the incompetence of its members. There will be a number of vacancies to fill at convention this June, and the method of selection of new men should be one of our greatest concerns.

Throughout the year the Chancellor does an excellent job through correspondence and interviews. The skeleton committees of the Branch perform a service by selecting the most promising candidates from the campus and by recommending them to the convention preferment committee. At convention the preferment committee can do no more than sit through numerous interviews and

tedious discussions. The deadline for files is the first of June, but often the examination of a candidate's qualifications must begin as late as the opening of convention. And then anything can happen on the convention floor.

At last convention a candidate whose name appeared fifteenth or sixteenth on the list of committee preferences was nominated for preferment early in the proceedings by an enthusiastic supporter, and the preferment was granted. The same day, after the House slate had been voted upon, a member moved that the name of a candidate who had been voted down be substituted for the name of another who had just been granted preferment. Although short of time and working with limited information, the preferment committee had made a diligent and honest effort to present to the convention those best fitted for the life and work of the Branch.

Last year several members of the Association stated on the convention floor that any man who has spent three years at Deep Springs deserves preferment at the House for a trial period, even though he may have been judged unworthy of Association membership. Lack of information concerning a man is the most frequent dodge for considering his qualification for membership. Unless a candidate from Deep Springs has a particularly dusky record, family ties that may cause prejudices, or peculiar personality-traits, he will slip into the Branch without difficulty. The man who has a colorless but competent record passes through the gauntlet more easily than a leader in some particular activity who may have offended some members by the aggressiveness of his leadership. After once being taken into the House, he has an excellent chance of being granted either membership or annually-repeated preferment until his college career is over. If the qualifications of the candidates from Deep Springs cannot be judged adequately by the time they apply for House membership, then the system which selects them, examines their credentials, and finally passes judgment, supposedly upon their merits, is hopelessly at fault.

At the Central Advisory Committee meeting held in Ithaca on April 23, the members were careful to point out the close relationship between Deep Springs and the As-

sociation. As the report of the committee indicates, 69% of Association membership has been recruited from Deep Springs. At present, 41% of the members of Cornell Branch are former Deep Springs men; and of the members of Telluride Association residing at the Branch, 60% are men from Deep Springs. There are only two Deep Springs men residing at the Branch who are not members of the Association. Of the six members who are not applying for preferment for next year, three are former Deep Springs men. Obviously the proportion of Deep Springs men in Telluride House will continue to fall below the long-run average unless the majority of next year's newcomers is from Deep Springs. To some this will imply that a higher percentage of Deep Springs candidates should be granted preferment, but to most of us it indicates the necessity of more careful scrutiny of the qualifications of all candidates.

Collaboration with a number of members in the Branch has produced a few suggestions toward a more efficient long-run preferment policy. I toss them into the ring for whatever they are worth:

- (1) Preparation of the slates for both membership and preferment by a preliminary Proportional Representation vote. This would allow the convention as a whole to determine the order in which the candidates would be considered—after the membership and preferment committees had summarized qualifications and made their recommendations.
- (2) Provision for circulation of candidates' files to members of the convention membership and preferment committees, chosen several months in advance of convention. Files could also be circulated to committees in cities where reside persons who will be active in convention affairs. This work could be facilitated by requiring the candidate to supply duplicates of his application, papers, and correspondence.
- (3) Pre-convention examination of files would be facilitated by moving the deadline from June 1st to a date three or four months prior to the opening of convention.
- (4) Encouragement of more adequate personal correspondence between Association members and candidates.

- (5) Adoption of a more "cold-blooded" attitude in considering the granting of preferment to men who have been in the House for one or more years. For the welfare of the Association, decisions *must* be on the criterion of merit rather than of timidity, kindness of heart, or charity. Harry Scott

### CONCLUSIONS

*(Continued from Page 1)*

has been the refuge of too many of our most brilliant and ablest members. Despite these facts, I offer, at the end of six years' contact with the Telluride ideal, the following general conclusions.

First, that the ideal of training a class of leaders must be kept alive; it is the only justification for our existence. Second, that the professional cynic has no place in Deep Springs or Telluride Association. The world is full enough of those who will destroy; our purpose must be constructive. Third, that our idealism must be dynamic and alive—whether directed at the immediate goal of improved medical facilities here or directed toward producing a higher type of achievement at Deep Springs and in the Association. Fourth, that the members of Telluride House should be held to the standard of initiative, responsibility, and leadership which L. L. insisted upon. Failure to manifest those qualities here should not be dismissed under the assumption that they will suddenly spring into being in the future.

Six years of association with the Telluride ideal leaves me with faith as to its possibility, cognizant of its shortcomings, and convinced that it must not be defined as an unattainable goal but rather as a standard of human conduct to be sought after and to be worked for. Our immediate function is to keep that ideal alive, and to do some small share of the work. If we do that, we shall have preserved for the future the conception which L. L. Nunn passed on to us.

### PHI BETA KAPPA

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world many persons should look to the educated man, to Phi Beta Kappa, for a solution to the pressing problems of modern civilization. To us they look for deliverance from rampant self-destructive materialism, and

to us for restoration of human values to a depressed and fearful world.

Phi Beta Kappa—Philosophy, the guide or helmsman to life—our motto itself is a clear dictate. It applies equally to our own lives and to our role in the life of the body politic. As individuals pursuing our chosen goals, we strive to apply our intellects to the broadening of the field of knowledge, to extend the powers of Reason by more thorough comprehension and control of our environment. So, also, within the social framework, ours is the task of supplying the ethical and intellectual leadership. We who are relatively free from the drives of self-interest—freed by our training in the humanities, by our historical perspective, by our application of the scientific method—we must act as "helmsmen" in directing social progress toward a better, happier, juster life.

The task is not easy. Our headlong advance in the extension of material powers has not been tempered with similar advances in social controls, until by their very misdirection our new physical powers threaten civilization itself. Wars, economic crises, and crime waves attest our failure in establishing new social and moral restraints.

That all scholarship and intellectual endeavor is doomed unless we can bridge this gap between our material progress and our ethical and political advance, becomes apparent when we observe contemporary events in the totalitarian governments of the world. There economic breakdown has been followed by suppression of human liberties, book-burnings, censorship, racial persecution, and the general subordination of art and culture to the purposes of a depraved and degenerate state. If our artists and scientists and philosophers are not to suffer the same fate, they must take active leadership in promoting and controlling social changes that will utilize our ever expanding physical powers in a richer, happier civilization.

But this role as active leaders is challenged from two directions. One comes from those among us who maintain that social leadership destroys our powers as pure scholars; that once we become partisans for social reform, we lose our capacity for objective and disinterested thought. But if this is so, surely our hopes for social and cultural progress

are doomed. If to maintain our ability as students, we must turn over the control of society to the ignorant and selfish, then social advance must stop, and scholarship must be itself subordinated to special interests. For here is the second group, Special Interests, that would confine us to our academic sanctuaries. Fearing the loss of their own usurped power, they sneer at scholarship as too "impractical" for mundane affairs. In the words of Thomas Mann, speaking of his own role as an artist:

"There is no lower kind of scorn than that visited upon the artist who 'descends into the arena.' And the ground of that scorn is interest—interest which prefers to gain its ends in darkness and silence, unchecked by the forces of the intellect or the spirit. Interest would confine artists to their proper domain of the cultural by telling them that politics is beneath their dignity. The result is that the cultural becomes the slave of interest, its accessory and accomplice, all for the false coin of a little dignity in return. The artist must not see that in this stately retreat to his ivory tower he is committing an act of anachronistic folly—must not see, yet today can hardly fail to see."

Our task then is to bridge the gap between pure scholarship and responsible citizenship. As scholars we follow the slow, painstaking process of the collection and assimilation of matter-of-fact knowledge. As citizens we accept the still more difficult responsibility of making decisions on complex social problems and then carrying our decisions into effect to the best of our ability.

Perhaps then we may be able, to some small extent, to justify the benefits we have received from society and Phi Beta Kappa may faithfully play its part in a new social progress.

#### HOUSE NOTES

The members of Cornell Branch are very happy to have Professor Burr back with them. Professor Burr spent the winter in Philadelphia working with Professor Howland of the University of Pennsylvania to prepare some of the unpublished papers of the late Henry C. Lea for the press. The House gave a tea in honor of Professor Burr on May 15.

The Entertainment Committee's program of informal Sunday evening gatherings has continued. On March

13, Parker Bailey gave a piano recital. Two weeks later Christopher Morley, Jr., gave a talk on some aspects of English Puritanism. On April 24, a symposium on the purpose of Telluride Association was arranged by the Public Speaking Committee; Collingwood, Rarig, and Spalding read papers, and discussion followed.

The Spring week-ends are busy for Telluride House. The Central Advisory Committee of Telluride Association met in Ithaca over the week-end of April 23; thirty-two members of the Association were present in person at this meeting and ten by proxy. On the week-end of April 30 the Branch was host to visitors to Cornell from Dartmouth and Pennsylvania for a tri-college conference on making democracy work. Over Cornell Day, May 7, several Deep Springs applicants were entertained at the Branch. The Telluride House Party was celebrated over the week-end of Spring Day, beginning with a formal dance on Thursday evening, May 19; twenty guests stayed at the House. The chaperones were Professor and Mrs. J. D. Burfoot and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sproston.

Fred Bullen has been awarded a graduate fellowship in Government at Harvard for next year. Robert Gorrell has been awarded the Cornell Fellowship in English. Cornell has also awarded George Manner the White Fellowship in Government. Christopher Morley, Jr. will be an assistant in English History at Cornell next year. Anderson Pace has accepted an assistantship in Chemistry at the University of North Carolina.

Robert Huffcutt was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and delivered the speech for the initiates at the banquet on May 12. Bonham Campbell was elected to Tau Beta Pi and has been chosen Recording Secretary for next year. John Niederhauser and Vincent Cochrane were elected to Hon-Nun-De-Kah. Robert Boochever and Austin Kiplinger were elected to Quill and Dagger. Paul Swatek was elected to Pyramid, Civil Engineering honorary society. Charles Collingwood and John Niederhauser were elected to Book and Bowl.

Austin Kiplinger succeeds Harry Scott as editor of *Areopagus* for the coming year; Vincent Cochrane has been chosen a member of the new

editorial staff, and Paul Swatek of the art board. Tom Dunham has been elected chairman and Ward Good-enough secretary of the Cornell American Student Union for next year.

Recent visitors to Cornell Branch have included: John DeBeers; John Flowers, Deep Springs alumnus; Dr. Paul Friedlaender, former professor of classics at the University of Berlin; Dr. Hu Shih, who lectured on recent discoveries of materials for the study of Chinese history; Professor James H. Hanford of Western Reserve University; Dean Lawrence Kimpton; Dr. and Mrs. William Layton; Major R. W. Leigh; Fraulein Emmi Leisner; Dr. Frank Monaghan; Nathaniel Pepper; Dr. Earl H. Pritchard, who was doing research in the Wason Chinese collection; Dr. Robson, of the London School of Economics, and Mrs. Robson; Dr. Henry E. Sigerist, head of the Johns Hopkins Institute for the Study of the History of Medicine, who lectured at Cornell on ancient and early medieval herbals; Miss Anna Louise Strong; Dr. Dag Strömbach; Dr. E. M. W. Tillyard, of Cambridge University, England; Kenneth Turner; Walter White, secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who talked at Cornell on the Anti-Lynching Bill.

#### NOTES AND QUOTES

E. L. G. Zalinski, alumnus of Deep Springs and former guest at Cornell Branch, writes from Harvard: "I have accepted a job with the New York Life Insurance Company as an organizing agent at a substantial salary. I will be working out of New York City—office 60 East 42nd Street. The job involves some selling and some managerial work. I'm pretty enthusiastic about the prospects and feel that the insurance business is about the most constructive sort of work I could undertake, particularly as my business school training puts me in a position to sell insurance as an expert on an estate planning basis."

The News Bulletin of the Institute of International Education of May 1 announces that Clarence Yarrow has been appointed instructor in government at New York University. Mike will spend the coming summer as director of one of the work camps of the American Friends Service Committee.