

JANUARY SEVENTH
1924

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

GENTLEMEN:

The refusal of the Southern Educational Association to give approval to Centre College for three consecutive years makes it necessary for me to lay before you the history of our case in negotiating with them.

It may be well for me to say the S. E. A. has been organized for a number of years. A few years ago a reorganization was effected and new standards for accrediting were adopted. All institutions up to the date of reorganization members of the Association were continued as members but subject to examination and approval. This gave two lists of members - the unapproved and approved. Approval is based upon reports made to the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Centre College is the last of the members of the organization not on the approved list. The history of our effort to get approval is as follows.

In the autumn of 1920 President W. A. Ganfield filled out the questionnaire sent out by the Southern Educational Association to Colleges and Universities for their information touching the internal life of these institutions. In that questionnaire is this interrogation--

"What are your productive endowments?"

To this he gave the reply,

"The productive endowments of Centre College are \$1,100,000.00."

A second question in that questionnaire was.

"What salary do you pay your professors?"

To this he made reply, giving the amount of salary paid to a full professor, as \$2,000.00.

At the time of the return of this questionnaire the Committee was investigating the applications of Georgetown, Transylvania and the University of Louisville. These institutions were approved. Centre College did not receive a reply to her application for the year 1920-21.

In the autumn of 1921, before leaving this institution, Dr. Ganfield again prepared answers to a similar questionnaire in which was repeated the statement concerning the productive endowments of this institution. However, his connection with the institution was severed before the meeting of the Southern Educational Association, and Professors Crooks and Rainey represented the institution at the meeting of the Association at Birmingham.

When these gentlemen appeared before the Executive Committee of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, to whom all applications for approval were referred, they were questioned concerning the productive endowments, they were shown the questionnaires for two years in which the aforesaid statement of the amount was presented, and asked for verification of the same. They could not verify the figures indicated because they had nothing to do with such figures in their work in the institution. Neither could they answer the question why salaries then paid were not larger, in view of such a large productive endowment.

In the meantime it was learned from some unknown source charges had been preferred against Centre College impugning the character of our athletic department, and also alleging it was the practice of the institution to receive students who were unprepared for College, in order that they might play on the football team. Professors Crooks and Rainey being questioned on these charges, answered that no students had been received improperly, all who were then in the institution having presented the required number of credits from Preparatory or High Schools for entrance to the Colleges of Kentucky. Their request for approval, however, was not granted.

I took charge of the President's office upon your call in July of 1922. At that time I found there were two men in the football team who were penalized and awaiting a decision from the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association's Executive Committee restoring them to eligibility. In due time, after much travel, correspondence and conversation with the Executive Committee we secured the re-instatement of these two men in October of 1922.

During that time, from July to October, I had learned that the institution was not on the approved list. I learned that application had been made the previous year, through Dr. Crooks and Prof. Rainey, and I communicated with the then Secretary of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Dr. Campbell, Dean of Washington and Lee University, with reference to our situation. I was instructed by Dr. Campbell, if I appeared before the Committee in New Orleans, I should bring the statement of credits upon which we had received all members of the Freshman class. In accordance with these instructions I took these credits as they had come to us from the High Schools and Preparatory Schools of the country with me, and appeared before the Executive Committee of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education at New Orleans, December 5, 1922.

When I was received in the session of the Committee I found a very marked attitude of the Committee, which seemed to me to be unfriendly. I presented the High School credits, which they declined to examine, stating that they had "no time for such matters."

They then began to examine me. They asked - "What is your productive endowment?" My reply was that according to the Balance Sheet of the Treasurer of Centre College, as well as I could remember, of June, 1922, the productive endowment of Centre College was \$666,000.00. They immediately presented me with Dr. Ganfield's statements above referred to, and asked for an explanation of the discrepancy. I was unable to throw any light on his statement. At this point a member of the Commission remarked - "There you have it. These two Presidents utterly disagreeing is a clear example of how impossible it is to get any definite information from Centre College."

On leaving the Committee I wired Dr. Ganfield for explanation of his report. He replied, "Consult your Treasurer's report." Following this suggestion, it has failed to yield any information warranting his statement in the questionnaire, and I have not been able to find any information that would explain this discrepancy in our reports. It seems most likely that, in answering the questionnaire, Dr. Ganfield inadvertently got hold of the figures for total assets as found in the report of Centre College to the General Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., instead of those for productive endowment. This is the only thing I have been able to discover on which the attitude of the Committee toward the College administration can be explained. However, up to this date, no representative from that Committee has been here to examine our books so as to verify my statements or refute them.

I was given to understand then that the conditions at Centre College were so unacceptable to the Committee that it would be impossible for us to secure accrediting until we "cleaned things up". I asked for a definition of this phrase. The request for a "definition" resulted in a general arraignment of the institution, but nothing definite was specified. The next day in conversation with the Chairman of the Committee, Dr. Bert Young, then of Vanderbilt University, I was informed that the following four charges were lodged against Centre College:

1. That her publicity was unethical.
2. That her athletic department was corrupt.
3. That her athletic department dominated the academic department.
4. That athletes were received here on insufficient credits.

He further stated that "Your Faculty is as rotten as your athletics", and that we would not get accrediting until we had "cleaned things up".

The second day of the Committee's sitting in New Orleans, I begged for an opportunity to appear before the Committee again at that meeting and to discuss the whole situation with them, but they denied me the request.

I came home determined to find out everything I could that would either substantiate or refute these charges. I learned that Mr. Gordy was the subject of criticism and the man referred to by Dr. Young as having been received on insufficient credits. On the matter of credits, I may say Mr. Gordy presented 15 units. Four of these being unsatisfactory he had been required to take examinations covering them. These he satisfactorily met. On the matter of receiving money considerations, I called Mr. Gordy to my office and put the straight question to him. "Did you ever receive any promises of money, emoluments of any sort, or gifts of any kind as an inducement to come to Centre College?" Mr. Gordy replied that he had not, and has since made the declaration before the entire student body that he has never received any consideration for coming to Centre or as a player on Centre College teams; but he said that he would be glad to turn over to me letters in his possession which would indicate what he had refused in the way of inducements to leave Centre College. He turned over to me two letters, one of which was from Macon, Georgia, which is as follows:--

"Macon, Georgia,
July 29th, '21.

Mr. M. T. Gordy, Jr.,
Abbeville, Ia.,

Dear Mr. Gordy:

The Lions Club, a civic organization of Macon, is interested in securing a good live football candidate to attend Mercer University. Your name has been furnished us as a prospect.

Advise us as soon as possible if you will come to Mercer, on the following conditions: A scholarship in Mercer to be obtained for you, and the Lions Club to pay you the sum of \$450.00 per year. That sum will leave you something like \$200.00 above your actual expenses.

(letter continued)

The civic organizations in Macon expect and intend, in cooperation with the Mercer Athletic Council, to build up a football, basket-ball and baseball team second to none in the South. We believe that you will be glad to be a member of that team. Mercer is one of the best educational institutions in the South, and at the same time that you are making your way through college you will be going through a good one.

In addition you will be in one of the most beautiful, prosperous and congenial cities in the South, will have the backing socially and generally of the best civic organization here and will find yourself boosted at all times and in every way. We believe that these advantages will be much greater than any you could possibly enjoy at Centre.

If interested wire the Chairman of this undersigned Committee collect as soon as you receive this so that the matter can be submitted to Tuesday's meeting of the Club for confirmation. Just say "Its a go".

Cordially yours,

(Signed) E. Clem Powers, Chairman
Roland H. Noel
Frampton Farmer
Harry S. Popper,

Lion's Club, Athletic Committee. "

The other letter was from Mr. Dan McGugin, who has been for a long time coach at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. This letter is as follows:

"Law Offices
Dan E. McGugin,
1016-17 Stahlman Building,
Nashville, Tenn.

June 2, 1921.

Mr. Minos Cordy, Jr.,
Abbeville, La.

Dear Minos:

I have yours of May 29th. I was of course disappointed at not being able to see you on your way home. I am going to write you very frankly but rather confidentially. Of course I have an interest in the matter which may somewhat prejudice me, but I sincerely feel you are making a mistake in going to Centre, because I believe the surroundings at present are not all you would desire. I also realize you are serious and ambitious and that you want to grow mentally, morally and physically.

In the first place it would be necessary for you to present 14 Carnegie units at Centre, Vanderbilt or any other institution in the S.I.A.A., in order to participate in football this fall. These units, of course, are definite things, you either will have them or you will not have them and you cannot play at Centre without them, neither could you get credit for them at Centre or any other school through any favoritism and ability to play. Also I have a very distinct impression that somebody connected with Centre is violating the spirit of the rules with reference to professionalism. All we ever do at Vanderbilt is to help young men get suitable employment and for what they receive they render a fair equivalent.

A member of the faculty of the University of Virginia told me in person that when Centre played the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, many of the present members of the Centre team, being then on the team, members of this team proceeded to bet large sums of money on the outcome of the game. For this reason, and others I have a feeling that the surroundings there are not what a serious high minded young man deserves. As I said, I am writing you confidentially and would prefer not to have these statements brought to the attention of the faculty at Centre, unless you deem it necessary. I have for sometime, however, about made up my mind to make an issue with some of the schools where I have reason to think the spirit and letter of the rules is being violated. Of course this is very often done without the knowledge of the faculty or any member of the faculty. Faculties at some of these schools would be outraged if they knew that the honor of a boy was being violated by statements over his signature and upon his honor.

At Vanderbilt you would have the best possible instructions. You would be required to work in order to get through. You would be of course associated with your friend Frank Godchaux and many other boys there who know you or know of you. I have arranged for a place at the Commercial where you could work this summer and more than cover your expenses in the summer school. At this club you would come in contact with the most progressive business men of our city. Men of character and initiative. As I understand your situation, after this work is done there would be no question concerning your units. You could continue to work at the Club or some more suitable place and earn enough to cover your expenses while in the University with such money as you could earn during the summer vacation.

I sincerely hope you will consider this matter very carefully and that you will write me that you will be here to take the summer school work.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) Dan E. McGugin."

DEMGG:B

In this letter, you will observe, Mr. McGugin makes certain proposals to Mr. Gordy and certain reflections on Centre College on the basis of communications which he had had from an unnamed member of the University of Virginia.

I wrote to Dr. Kirkland telling him of my desire to unearth any thing that would substantiate the charges that had been privately communicated to me as having been lodged against us before their Committee, and that in my investigations I had come upon this letter from his coach, Mr. McGugin, copy of which I forwarded to him. The correspondence is as follows:

"Chancellor J. H. Kirkland,
Vanderbilt University,
Nashville, Tenn.

"March 9, 1925

My dear Dr. Kirkland:

Since my experience with the Committee in New Orleans, in which I discovered their earnest conviction that things were all wrong here, I have been doing my best to discover everything that might substantiate or even warrant the convictions which

They had. Among other things I have discovered a letter, a copy of which I forward to you.

I want to say, Dr. Kirkland, that I know of no way by which we college men can change the commercialization of college athletics except through a perfectly friendly and frank communication with each other upon the subject whenever we find anything that is calculated to undermine the educational standards and purposes which the administration has, and to report same to our brothers in the work. For this reason I am reporting to at least two or three colleges data that I have turned up in my investigations, and I am requesting that those to whom I have sent letters like unto this which I forward to you, in the event that they have any such data in their possession concerning Centre College, to forward the same to me.

I was and am perfectly sincere in my statements made to the Committee in New Orleans and to you in this letter, I believe that we have effected some things for the uplift of educational ideals in this institution this year, and I want to say that I have secured the pledge of every man connected with this institution in the administration of athletics to cooperate with me in the establishment of the right ideals in that department.

You will understand that I am not making any communication of this data that concerns Vanderbilt to any other member of the Committee.

With high personal esteem, I remain

Cordially yours,

R. AMES MONTGOMERY
PRESIDENT."

Dr. Kirkland's reply--

"Vanderbilt University,
Nashville, Tenn.
March 12, 1923.

President R. Ames Montgomery,
Centre College,
Danville, Kentucky.

My dear President Montgomery:

I have your letter of March 9 enclosing copy of a letter written by Mr. McGugin to Mr. Gordy on June 2, 1921.

Before taking this letter up with Mr. McGugin I should be glad to know just what in your opinion was the offense committed by Mr. McGugin. I note clearly that he is trying to influence Mr. Gordy to come to Vanderbilt University. I note further that he repeats certain information against Centre given him by a member of the faculty of the University of Virginia. I note further that he offers to help Mr. Gordy find some work in Nashville for which, however, he is to render a fair equivalent in service. I am wondering if there is any thing else in the letter that escapes me, or whether in your opinion the main offense was that Mr. McGugin wrote at all.

I agree with you fully that colleges ought to be very frank in dealing with each other, and I am very glad for you to report to me any and everything which comes to your attention regarding Vanderbilt University.

I shall make some inquiry on the matters suggested in your letter.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) J. H. Kirkland."

JHK/B

To this I made the following reply-

"March 14, 1923.

"Chancellor J. H. Kirkland,
Vanderbilt University,
Nashville, Tenn.,

My dear Dr. Kirkland:

In sending to you copy of the letter from Mr. McGugin to Mr. Gordy, dated June 2, 1921, with my letter of March 9th, I was not intending to make any charges at all against Mr. McGugin. However, in that you ask my opinion, permit me to say I think Mr. McGugin might be charged with scouting, which I think was condemned in the report of the Committee made last December, of which Prof. Douglas Anderson was Chairman. The article to which I refer is article five of that Committee's recommendation closing their report. I am not preferring any such charge and only seeking to get information substantiating the charges made by the Committee that refused to approve Centre College and to give such information to other college presidents as I would wish them to give to me. I have not yet been able to have one single charge clearly stated, nor one single written statement substantiating any such charges on account of which we still seem to be denied approval by the Southern Educational Association.

Thanking you for your courteous reply and assurance of agreement touching our frank dealing with each other, I remain with high personal esteem,

Cordially yours,

R. Ames Montgomery.

President."

Dr. Kirkland replied to this as follows:

"March 16, 1923.

"President R. Ames Montgomery,
Centre College,
Danville, Kentucky.

My dear President Montgomery:

I thank you for your letter of March 14. There is no question as to your interpretation of Mr. McGugin's letter. It was a distinct effort on the part of a coach to secure a student who gave promise of athletic ability. I think we must remember that this practice has been very common with

all coaches in days past. It is criticized as you say in the report of the Committee made last December, because the tendency of such action is always to open the way for real inducements. We are developing a stricter system of ethics in all these football matters. I hope you may be able to get such information as you ought to have from the College Commission of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States. I realize, however, the great difficulty of getting statements and criticisms in writing.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) J. H. Kirkland."

JHK/B

In this correspondence you will observe-

1. The sincerity of our purpose to uncover any irregularity or corruption that might be found in Centre College Athletic or Academic department.
2. Our appeal to Dr. Kirkland and through him to the Executive Committee to aid us in uncovering anything that would substantiate the charges said to have been made to them against Centre College.
3. That in response to Dr. Kirkland's request for my opinion as to what offence Mr. McGugin was guilty of I definitely replied citing resolutions of the Southern Association covering the offence.
4. That Dr. Kirkland acknowledged my citation and the offence committed by his coach.

As a fifth item for your notation, permit me to say neither Dr. Kirkland nor any member of the Committee has up to date (January 7, 1924) offered any letter or affidavit to any offence committed against the rules and regulations of the S. E. A. by any coach, faculty member or student of Centre College. In addition, we have evidence that we are ready to offer should it become necessary, that the Athletic coaches of Vanderbilt have not heeded the "speaking to", which Dr. Kirkland promised in his letter of March 16, 1923; that they paid the expenses of certain students booked for Centre to come by Nashville in September 1923, and made certain promises of money considerations if they would cancel their plans to come to Centre and remain at Vanderbilt University.

Another matter was presented to me when I returned from New Orleans--namely, the earnest effort being made by the University of Alabama to secure Mr. Charles Moran as Coach. They offered him approximately \$9,000. We were paying him \$8,700. Mr. Moran decided not to accept their proposal and approached me for a new understanding and contract. I entered into conference with him and we made a new contract at \$5,500~~000~~ a year for seven months work.

We now come to the time, (autumn of 1923) when we must prepare a new report in applying for approval, and we sent for the application blanks. These application blanks were filled out and a special request that we make a tabulation of the credits received for the last two Freshman classes upon their entrance to Centre College, a very laborious task involving the tabulation of at least 15 different items for approximately 250, men, was complied with. All of this data was forwarded to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. (I have learned from private sources that this data had not been considered when we appeared before the committee.)

On December 4, 1923, Professor Crocks and I arrived in Richmond to personally support our application. The Executive Committee of this Commission called us on the afternoon of Tuesday, December 4th, and said they had a few questions to ask us which pertained to the athletic department. We answered all their questions fully and frankly. These questions pertained to the salary paid to the President, the professors and to the coach. We were asked if we were quite sure that the coach did not receive any perquisites on the side or any rake off from the gate receipts. We were also asked concerning the relation of Mr. Gordy and Mr. Covington, who play on our football team, to the athletic department, and did we know of any money considerations being given to them for their work on our team?

To all of this we made reply that there was not to our knowledge any considerations given to these men, and that we had made earnest effort to unearth anything of that character, and that we had the assurance from Gordy that he had never received any such considerations, and we also believed that Mr. Covington's family was abundantly able to take care of him and that no considerations or promises had ever been made to him. In reply to this we were told that the Committee did not doubt that we had given them a true and complete account of things in so far as we knew, yet they believed there were certain facts in the case with which we were not acquainted.

I demanded a specification of any facts they might have that would throw light on our trouble. This they declined to give.

As we were dismissed we were told that the Committee's report would be made on the floor of the Association on Thursday or Friday, at what hour they would not say.

We retired from the Committee with the conviction that we had not been heard and that the mind of the Committee had been made up against us in advance.

On Thursday morning, December 6, without any warning to us, the Executive Committee of the Southern Educational Association to whom the Executive Committee of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education had referred the Centre College matters, brought in the recommendation that Centre College be dropped from the membership roll of the Association. When the motion was made and seconded, and after it was stated by the president for the vote, I arose and asked if they would not hear Centre College. I was given the floor.

When I began to speak I started with the statement that Centre College had had no intimation from the Commission or the Executive Committee of the Association that such a recommendation was to be made. I said that for three successive years we had sought approval, but had been denied, for what reason we had never learned from the Commission except such as was to be learned in the four general statements which had been given to me privately by members of the Commission. I then stated the four charges as previously indicated in this report and dealt with each one of them before the whole Association, reading the above letters in my statement.

The result of my presentation of the case was a very warm discussion on the floor, and the referring back to the Executive Committee of the Southern Educational Association the Centre College matter with instructions that they bring in the specific charges on account of which they had made this recommendation, either at the meeting then in session, or at the annual meeting in December 1924.

On Friday morning the special committee on Athletics appointed by this Association two years ago made their second annual report. The basis of their report was a questionnaire sent out to all the Colleges making inquiry in respect to salaries paid to the President of said Colleges, the salaries paid to professors and to coaches and physical directors. This report was in the hands of Professor Anderson, of Tulane University. It was a very thorough piece of work. Professor Anderson had tabulated the replies made by the Colleges to his questionnaire on these points. One of the charges that had been privately indicated to me was that Centre had committed a serious offense in employing Mr. Moran, and in paying him a salary in excess of that paid to any professor and even to that of the President for the time for which he was employed. The questions that had been asked us on the previous Tuesday indicated the judgment of the committee that this was one of our chief offenses and one on account of which our request for approval was being denied.

When Professor Anderson's report was read (which has not been placed in the hands of the Association so that I cannot quote to you the exact figures), it showed that Centre College was not the worst of offenders; but that a number of institutions, and conspicuously those represented on the Commission which had sat upon us, and a certain institution recommended and voted approval the previous day, were as extreme in their violation of the standards of the Association in this matter as was Centre College.

Of course this only exhibited the unfairness of the treatment which I had exposed on the floor the day before, and when the Executive Committee made their report on Centre College following this report of Professor Anderson's on the athletic situation in the South, they declined to sit on the Centre College case any longer and advised the appointment of a new and special committee to go over all the data before the Executive Committee of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and to visit Centre College, make a thorough examination there and bring in a report next year.

In a speech Dr. South of Goucher College, made on Thursday, he charged that most grievous offense was committed by the administration of Centre College; but what the offense was he did not indicate, neither did he indicate whether it was in the present administration or in the previous one. Presumably he meant in this administration, because he declared that "the Committee had forbidden me to continue Mr. Moran as coach when I met them in New Orleans." When he finished his speech I arose and declared that his statement in reference to Mr. Moran and the Committee's instructions had fallen upon my ears for the first time.

I am sending this full statement of the case to you first of all to acquaint you with the facts in the case. In the second place to exhibit the importance of the issue. On the one hand you will see that Centre College is face to face with an opposition that for three or more successive years has kept us from an approval that has issued in a judgment of positive disapproval -- an opposition, the identity of which we have not been able to locate except in letters that have fallen into our hands and the character of which we are not permitted to know, except such as vague general terms of vilification may express and the measure of which can be taken only in the favor that is denied us. We do know that a fixed conviction appears in the minds of gentlemen sitting on the Committees of Commissions we have had to meet and that they have told us privately their purpose to deny our request on the basis of that conviction. This conviction as it seems to us bears every evidence of having been created on prejudice and one sided testimony.

But the result, our present unapproved status, is more important than may appear in this narrative. There are at least four aspects of this result which I will set forth.

1. We are unapproved by the standarizing organization of the South.
2. Our credits to students must bear this stigma when they transfer to other institutions for continuation of their undergraduate or their post graduate work.
3. Our competition is increased to a prohibitive degree for us when we seek the best men from the High Schools and Preparatory Schools for our student body.
4. The field of opportunity for our graduates in the teaching profession, of whom we have an increasing number, is greatly restricted by this refusal of the S. E. A. to accredit us. No approved secondary school dares to take but a very limited number of our graduates, if any.

The experience through which we are passing has seemed to me to call for this frank and extended statement. It requires us also to make a most earnest effort to gather such data as will throw light on the identity and character of the opposition we have to meet, and also that will bring to light any irregularity, if there be such in our own organization. No one I am sure is more desirous of exposing "rottenness" if it be in the organization of Centre College than are the President, the Faculty and Trustees of this institution.

We are now awaiting the visit of the Committee appointed at the meeting of the S. E. A. at Richmond, Virginia, December 7th, 1923.

Respectfully yours,

R. Ames Montgomery
President.

P. S.

Would you advise the publication of any part of this report and its circulation among the friends, alumni or institutions of the South? It has been suggested by a Dean of the State University that the other institutions of the country should know this history.