

FEBRUARY FIFTH
1924

President's statement to the Board of Trustees of Centre College at their meeting, February 5th, 1924.

GENTLEMEN:

I have called you together for the consideration of two propositions independent of each other, but closely related in their bearing upon the future of this institution.

I have written you giving you a description of the relation of this institution with the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in the Southern States. This Association is the accrediting agency for Colleges and Universities in the Southern States. It is rather difficult to state just what halted them in giving approval to this institution since we have never been able to secure anything more than a general statement that our athletic department was "rotten". They have also used the same phrase in reference to our Faculty. These two phrases have never been defined, but have been the utterance of the members of the Executive Committee of the Commission, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, and also of the Executive Committee of the Association.

In reference to this general charge against our athletic department they have never specified except as in our last appearance before them, which was on December 5th, 1923. At that time they indicated that their animosity against this institution was in reference to our employment of Mr. Charles Moran as coach, and upon the general charge in reference to two of our students, that they were received on insufficient credits, and the intimation made that they were receiving money considerations for athletic services. Permit me to say in reference to this charge - I think it unjust and indefensible. I have challenged them to indicate the specific complaints against us in reference to Mr. Moran or these students, and to present their evidence for our information, but I have failed to receive any statement or specification beyond the general one above referred to.

I have been told emphatically by different members of the Association that no institution would be approved that employed either a Moran or a McMillin. I have learned also from like sources that their objection to these gentlemen is in their professional character evidenced in the high salaries paid to them and in the character of their training and publicity.

Permit me to say that I do not think it will be possible for them to substantiate their charges, and the general attitude of condemnation and black listing of these gentlemen is unjust.

With these preliminary statements concerning these gentlemen and our relation to the Southern Association, I will take up the situation that has been thrust upon us by the resignation of Mr. Moran.

While in New York attending the meeting of the Association of American Colleges I received the following telegram:

"Wish you to consider this my resignation football coach Centre College be effective at once. Sure I have done enough for Centre College for this request to be granted. Wish to give College enough time secure another coach. I will assist in spring training and teach him about his material if so desired. I am disheartened and dissatisfied.

My son and myself have suffered a wrong and I refuse to coach in the South or to have any College benefited by my efforts in the South. Please accept this resignation by wire January 9th. This decision on my part is final. I am blaming no one in fact I love you and Dr. Allen for the things you have done for me and hope to profit by same in the future. Have shown Allen this telegram. Grant me this one request, answer this by return wire accepting my resignation as my decision is final. I will not come back to Centre or any other Southern College to coach."

C. B. MORAN."

On my return to Danville I found the State all stirred up and eager to know what would be our solution of the problem. Telegrams were forwarded to the President and the Chairman of the Athletic Board of Control from the Alumni organizations at Chicago and Louisville, in addition to letters from different directions urging upon the administration to call Mr. Alvin Nugent McMillin. The entire local community was of a single mind and in agreement with the Alumni of Chicago and Louisville in the conviction that Mr. McMillin was the only man who could successfully meet the situation.

At a meeting of the Athletic Board of Control held on January 15th, action was taken expressing their unanimous judgment that Mr. McMillin was the most desirable man for the vacancy, and after so expressing their mind, they committed the whole matter to the President.

I had presented to this Board two considerations involved in this matter, which might make it impractical to call Mr. McMillin.

In order to get some light on the problem it seemed to me desirable to first of all take up the subject by conference with certain officers of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States. I left on the morning of the 16th of January to visit President McCallie, of McCallie School in Chattanooga, the retiring President of the Association. The result of my conference with him, and upon his advice, lead me to visit the Secretary, Dean Jack of Emory College. Neither of these men having been informed by the newly elected President as to the personnel of the Committee appointed to visit Centre College, I followed the earnest advice of Dean Jack and went to Columbia, South Carolina, to talk with the President of the Association, Dean Baker.

In talking with him I learned that but two members had been appointed to visit Centre College, namely: President Guth, of Goucher College, and Dean Key, of Millsaps College. I was asked to name the third member. I suggested Colonel Ensley, of Sweetwater Military Institute, Dean Jack, of Emory College, President Few, of Trinity College, successively, neither one of whom seemed to be entirely acceptable. And as a fourth I named President Chase, of North Carolina, who was acceptable, and I was assured he would be requested immediately to act on the Committee.

At the same time in conversation with the President of the Association I entered a protest against Dr. Guth on the ground that he had sat upon the Executive Committee of the Commission, or of the Association, on three different occasions, and I was quite sure his mind was committed against us. I pled for a Committee whose personnel was entirely unconnected with the previous history and who might take the data the Commission had collected against us and the data they might collect here in this institution and make their decisions upon it, without previous prejudices.

In my conversations with President McCallie, Dr. Jack and Dr. Baker, all

three referred to the fact that the newspapers announced that we had called Mr. McMillin to succeed Mr. Moran. My reply was - "No, we have not called Mr. McMillin, but suppose we should call him, what would be the probable reaction in the Association?". And they all three agreed in their individual statements - "Such action on the part of Centre College would be a great tactical blunder".

I then returned to Danville, and after conference with Dr. Allen we called the Athletic Board of Control and the local members of the Executive Committee to a joint conference on Wednesday, January 23rd. They all agreed, without dissenting voice, that Mr. McMillin was the most suitable man for our work and situation, and that he should be invited to a conference. In accordance with their action the President of the College, the Chairman of the Athletic Board of Control and the President of the Alumni Association invited Mr. McMillin to a conference. Mr. McMillin arrived in the city on Friday evening, the 25th of January.

We were in conference for four hours that evening. The conclusion of which conference was a statement from Mr. McMillin that the least salary upon which he could accept our position would be \$9,000 for the College year (and moving expenses).

The President of the College had laid down three principles in the conversation to which he would adhere.

FIRST: That a coach, whoever he might be, invited to Centre College must accept the educational and moral purposes of the administration.

SECOND: He must be an all-time coach, cooperating in character development for at least nine months in the year.

THIRD: That his salary must not be greater than that which was paid to the highest administrative officer in the institution. (The President agreed to include the sum voted by the Trustees for maintenance of the President's house as part of this salary, which makes a total of \$7,500.)

After much conference Mr. McMillin firmly adhered to his decision that he could not accept \$7,500, because in coming to us, in accordance to the first principle above referred to, it was made clear that he would have to give up his professional Sabbath football, and because in coming at \$9,000 it would be necessary for him to sacrifice at least \$3,000 a year. His total income for two years, including his professional football, being about \$11,000 annually.

The local members of the Board, working on this proposition, thought they had found a way of meeting the President's position and that of Mr. McMillin by giving him a salary of \$7,500 for coaching and \$1,500 a year for field service that he might render. But Mr. McMillin declined to accept a split contract and the President objected on the ground that such a contract would be considered by the members of the Southern Association as more or less of a subterfuge.

It being still the conviction as expressed in the last conference between the local Trustees and the President that Mr. McMillin was the most suitable man for the place, the President felt called upon to refer the whole matter to this Board for action.

Permit me to say, before making a further statement of what the calling of Mr. McMillin involves, that I believe in him; in his integrity of character; in his capability to inspire and teach football and in the general correctness of his influences among students on the campus, and I do not have any doubt but what he and I and the Athletic Board of Control and the Faculty could work together in the great task we have before us.

However, it is highly important for us to understand the issues we will have to face in the calling of Mr. McMillin. To call Mr. McMillin at any salary means the severance of our relation with the Southern Educational Association; it means that we must surrender all expectations of approval from that organization.

The significance of our lack of approval I have already pointed out to you in my communication to the members of the Board under date of January 7th. I have no brief for the position and attitude of the Southern Educational Association toward Centre College and the black listing of Mr. McMillin. I think it is founded upon alleged facts and supported by a spirit of pettiness and jealousy. There have been some slight irregularities in the history of football at Centre College, but they are too insignificant, on the one hand, and so frequently paralleled in the history of other institutions that the position and attitude of the Southern Educational Association toward Centre College could not be warranted on them.

The question is, therefore, whether this Board, in the consciousness of our integrity and the high purpose of this institution to do a creditable and worthy piece of Christian education, wishes to steer its own course irrespective of this standardizing agency. While that is what I would like to do, nevertheless, I do not believe it expedient for us to defy them.

The second proposition: The calling of Mr. McMillin at a salary of \$9,000, is a violation of an administrative conviction of mine, and I cannot recommend it. Therefore I have requested you as the official representatives of this institution to accept responsibility for the decision in this matter.

My reasons for unwillingness to employ Mr. McMillin at a salary in excess of that paid to the highest administrative officer in this institution are supported by the following convictions:

FIRST: The educational balance demands this. This is an educational institution. Its student body is invited here for educational purposes. Its numerous departments, other than athletics, are for educational purposes. In no one of these departments are we spending as much money for the education task as Mr. McMillin demands. The largest sum spent in any department at the present time for academic purposes is \$8,000. This department ministers to practically every student in the institution directly, while the department of athletics would minister to less than eighty (80) men directly, and to but a very small company intensively.

SECOND: Our educational ideals for students sustain my position. In America a general conviction has taken possession of us that the highest paid man is the important man. It is very difficult to maintain the ideal of education in our Colleges today against the materialist appeal of the business mind that emphasizes money making. If we are to employ a man and focus him before our public and our students by such an excess of salary, we will only increase our handicap in educational effort.

THIRD: It is difficult to secure a working efficiency in the teaching force when we create such a vast distinction in compensation for services rendered. I am quite aware of the force of the argument that the athletic department earns its own income, but it must not be forgotten that before it begins to earn its own income it capitalizes academic services rendered in the institution for its own purpose. If we do not have a College with standards set up to attract the capable and the worthy of the teaching force that can maintain those standards, the athletic department will have no foundation upon which to build. No athletic department can maintain itself without an academic foundation, and it is not fair to the academic department to start the athletic department off on a money making career while the academic is condemned to poverty.

FOURTH: Our educational standing in accrediting organizations demand it. Permit me to say that the accusation urged against Centre College, and also against Mr. McMillin, is that exorbitant salaries are paid. In the report of Dean Anderson to the Southern Educational Association it was shown that this charge was not peculiar to this institution, nor to Mr. McMillin.

According to that report Georgia Tech, Vanderbilt, Columbia, South Carolina, Washington and Lee, and a number of others were worse offenders than Centre College, while a number of men received as much money for coaching as Centenary College pays to Mr. McMillin. Nevertheless, there is a wide spread and strengthening opposition among College Professors and administrators against this practice of Colleges and Universities paying large salaries to coaches. Their opposition is on the ground that seasonal coaches are detrimental rather than helpful to College life; that the practice is destructive to educational ideals; that the balance in working efficiency is destroyed; that the sporting public intrudes too much on academic purposes through the employment of high powered, high prices men.

It happens that at this time those who are in authority and empowered to inflict penalties upon us are holding to this position with self-righteous insistence. I say self-righteous because so far as other institutions are concerned they are worse offenders in some instances than are we, and so far as the public knows are making no movement to change their practice while excluding us from participation in their privileges.

I have written down these statements in order that I might get the whole matter before you and that there may arise no mistake from uncertainty as to what I have said on the matter.

I make this statement of my position, along with the historical statement as to the position of the College, with humility and considerable hesitancy because I am fully aware that adherence to my position on the part of the College will not be without its certain sequences. I am not under the impression that adherence to my position will clear away our difficulties with the Southern Association. I am not unmindful of the tremendous sag in publicity and interest on the part of a large contingency of our Alumni. I am fully aware that it involves possibly one or two years halt in our forward advance in student enrollment.

Whichever line of procedure this Board takes you face grave responsibilities and I submit this statement of the situation to you and request your decision as to what our policy shall be.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

R. James Montgomery
PRESIDENT.