

Ronald Reagan

As Educator

For two years we have been instructed by the radical opposition at Berkeley on the evils of the swollen and gigantic multiversity that constitutes the University of California: the vast bureaucracy, the impersonality, the emphasis on quantity, the use of the multiversity to process swelling numbers of students into the military-industrial complex. All these stem from two root causes: the burgeoning of mass, indeed almost universal, education, and the development of governmental colleges. If the government educates, it is bound to educate for its goals and indoctrinate in its values. Now, Governor Reagan, in his first acts in office in California, has taken two important steps toward the dismantling, or at least the whittling down, of this elephantine growth: the dramatic slashing of the University of California budget, and the firing of the theoretician of the multiversity himself, Clark Kerr. Also, Reagan has moved to require the university to charge some tuition, most people consider this a terribly "reactionary" step, but what is so terrible about moving some of the burden for paying for education from the backs of the California taxpayers and on to the students themselves? It is an odd construction of the terms "progressive" and "humanitarian" to load the expenses of education onto those who are not getting its often dubious benefits, and to allow the university students to enjoy these benefits while loading the costs onto others. What is progressive about that? Furthermore, charging

tuition will help to reduce that selfsame swollen educational Leviathan which we all have been attacking for the last several years.

This brings us to the proper reaction to Governor Reagan's blitz attack against the University of California. For those who have really been opposed to the multiversity, to Clark Kerr and the proliferation of bureaucracy, there is only one answer: to hail the Reagan moves and to cheer the ouster of Kerr. The fact that Ronald Reagan is manifestly not an eminent educator, or the fact that his ouster of Kerr was prompted by Kerr's being "too weak" on the Berkeley radicals, is beside the point. The point is that these particular actions are in themselves healthy and even liberating, and therefore should be supported.

The reaction of the Liberals is interesting if predictable. Liberals are nothing if not smugly content with the American System, but let their cozy privileges and perquisites be in the slightest bit threatened, and they begin to howl like banshees. Hence, the nationwide instant hysteria by the Liberals about the ouster of Kerr, and the mobilizing of Establishment students and faculty, who again find common ground in defending centrist privileges against the bogey of the Ultra-Right. The important thing is that the New Left not get suckered into defending the privileges of Liberals in the name of the old coalitionist mythology of combatting the menace from the Ultra-Right. There is danger in not remembering, over and over again, the great lesson that has been painfully won over the years: "all right we are two nations" (in the immortal words of the early Dos Passos), and the Liberals are on the other side. In fact, there is good ground for holding that the Liberals are the major Enemy. To allow ourselves to get drawn in to a pro-Kerr coalition would be to abandon all the insights of recent years and to surrender to all the ills of the multiversity.

There is one Liberal argument which needs to be speared here and now: that the Reagan move to oust Kerr means the introduction of that terrible thing, "politics", into the university. The point is that as soon as one builds a government university, politics is already there and cannot be eliminated: for it is the government that collects taxes from the citizens to pay for its operations. To "eliminate politics" from governmental universities means to eliminate any influence by the politicians who are at least in some degree responsive to the views of the voters, and to turn their control over to a self-selected oligarchy of Liberal educa-

tionists who do not have to be in any sense responsive to the wishes of the people. Given the unfortunate existence of governmental universities, there is no ideal solution; the best or rather, the least bad, way to operate in that case is to allow control by those who are at least responsive to the desires of the taxpaying public.

One of the pro-Kerr Regents, emerging from the session that ousted Kerr, complained bitterly that this was a happy day for both the "extreme right" and the "extreme left". In saying this, the Liberal Regent caught hold of a profound truth: that the realities of the present day more and more require a coalition, even a fusing, of these two "extremes". For both of these extremes have caught hold of part of the total truth about our society, and both of them can blend, far more easily than is generally believed, into a common assault upon the Totalitarian Center, upon that "menace" that is not, like the bogeys of the Ultra-Left and Ultra-Right, a phantom potential of some far-off future, but the group that is oppressing all of us, right here and now.