INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT FELIX MORLEY
DELIVERED AT THE COLLEGE, 11:00 A.M.,
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1940.

Three days ago a substantial proportion of both the student body and the faculty of Haverford College were registered on this campus for what the Selective Training and Service Act calls "work of national importance". I had thought that the faculty at least were already doing work which deserved to be so characterized, but perhaps not.

The long arm of the State, reaching out to this tranquil, self-governing community, has thus given us a reminder of its pervasive and inexorable power. For the moment it is only a reminder, but even so this registration must be regarded as a portent of the new and difficult age which we are entering. All too clearly it foreshadows the unwelcome but inescapable problems which loom ahead for this and educational institutions of similar character. If we are to save our privately-endowed colleges we must give close attention to the way the tides are running.

A bitter paradox underlies many aspects of our era. The marvellous achievements of science are being used to destroy the civilization which science has achieved. Learning has been directed to the obliteration of its own temples. The great ideals of human liberty are led to the sacrifice by those who would preserve them. But of all the paradoxes around us none is more disconcerting than the fact that we, living during one of the greatest upheavals of recorded history, have so little understanding of the historical significance of our own times.

For some this lack of insight need not be disturbing. The physician, for instance, is fulfilling his social function if he faithfully follows his mission of healing. The architects who design, and the engineers who execute, can rest with an easy conscience at the close of each day's construction. Even the newspaper man, though frequently devoid of both rest and conscience, may preserve self-respect by adequately presenting and inadequately analyzing the day's events as they develop.
But for the educators, at least for those who are not merely vegetators, the times are fraught with a peculiar tribulation.

Those entrusted with posts of leadership in our academies must indeed feel that their case now is that of the blind leading the blind. What teacher can today anticipate with any assurance the character of the society for which he is training the young ideas entrusted to his guidance? What pedagogue can be sure of his pedagogy? How increasingly vivid the double meaning in the word "professor"!

For some reason this ceremony brings to my mind Andersen's pathetic fairy tale entitled "The Emperor's New Clothes". You will recall how shamefully that dignitary was beguiled by some racketeering leaders of a tailor's union. They coupled the weaving of a wholly imaginary costume with a warning that the cloth was too delicate to be visible by any who were incompetent in their jobs. Both the emperor and his court -- or shall I say faculty -- were in consequence ashamed to admit that nothing seemed to materialize from a lavish expenditure of palace funds. Believing himself decked out in academic robes, but actually clad only in his fear of exposure, the emperor stepped out to his coronation, clutching, since he could find no pocket, a carefully projected inaugural address. It was a child, very likely a precocious freshman, who broke the embarrassed silence by exclaiming: "But he has nothing on!"

We can afford to smile at the suggested parallel because we assume that it is without validity for any of us. In a mixture of complacency and conviction, perhaps containing a rather strong admixture of the former, educators assume that if they have nothing on, at least their nakedness will not be discovered. I am not so sure of this.

I suspect that the time is coming when educational institutions, particularly those which are endowed, will be asked to give convincing reasons for the continuance of prerogatives too lightly regarded as inalienable. And those reasons will
have to be convincing to society as a whole rather than to trustees, alumni or prospective clients. When that time comes, and the sardonic registration of our students for "work of national importance" is fair warning, it will not be enough to point to a winning football team, to a new dormitory, or even to a carload of hard-won Phi Beta Kappa keys. It will be necessary, if our colleges are to continue in anything like their present form, to give evidence that the activity of the campus is itself "work of national importance".

The burden of proof, in my opinion, is on us. We are the ones who assume that our function is essential; that our bits of research are steadily building the coral reef of civilization; that as a result of college training our graduates are in their various ways constructively leavening the great lump of social ailments; that in return for our corporate contribution we deserve general admiration and respect, or at the very least undisturbed opportunity to go our way.

Personally, I believe that this faith in ourselves and our work is justified. But I can readily understand that many might not agree. If I had spent night after night cowering like a rat in an air-raid shelter, or even if I lived in a Philadelphia slum and day after day could find nothing useful to which to turn my hand, then I too might be adding my voice to the swelling chorus which with some reason asks: "What is the good of our colleges? What, aside from pretensions, have they really accomplished for a better world?"

Those are questions which must be answered, particularly by those endowed institutions which ipso facto are expected to make some special and presumably noteworthy contribution to the general welfare. The very fact of endowment accentuates responsibility, although unfortunately it may also create conflicting or neutralizing responsibilities. Between the problems of endowment, however, each college administration will plot its own course, progressive or retrogressive
as the case may be. The real point is that the endowed college must respond, for better or worse, to the collective responsibilities which have been inescapably placed upon it.

In responding to these responsibilities the influence of the past will be important, particularly at an institution as venerable, both in years and in tested traditions, as that which you are honoring by your presence today. Almost eleven decades have passed since the Quaker founders of Haverford surveyed what was then the farmland hereabouts and found it, in their own words, "of unquestionable salubrity". The constant effort of four generations of Haverfordians have contributed to making this campus the dream of beauty, the peaceful sanctuary, that we see today. One result of this endeavor, I am told, is that the monetary value of the property has, since 1833, increased one-hundredfold.

That, however, is an indifferent and most unsatisfactory measure of the value of our heritage. All of us at Haverford are well aware, indeed intensely proud, of the past achievement. But our real concern, in the precise Quaker meaning of that fine word, is with the future. This land, these buildings, and those intangibles which give them life are here not merely to be admired but to be utilized. And it is the method and manner employed in utilizing our resources which will in the last analysis determine the underlying value of our endowment.

Determination of method and definition of manner are now, for Haverford, in large measure my responsibility. All of you in this audience can imagine, and some of you realize only too keenly, the literal anguish through which the Board of Managers passed before they asked me to assume the presidency. In his charming "Story Of A Small College" Isaac Sharpless relates that when he was named to this position, in 1887, "the President of the Board told me . . . he had hoped that a more satisfactory selection could have been made." If Norris Leeds has not yet told me that, the omission is due not to any lack of justification but rather to a development of the amenities in Philadelphian Quakerism. Certainly it is no more
than the most obvious truth that in many respects, in my case, "a more satisfactory selection could have been made".

However, I will say quite frankly that I am not at the moment worrying about my own deficiencies and do not propose to do so unduly. Others will do that for me and with refreshing Quaker frankness will keep me posted on what is and is not done at Haverford. A few broad hints have come my way already and since they all represent various aspects of this common concern of ours, I welcome them. Nobody ever annoyed me by saying that my ideas are screwy. For I inherit enough of the scientific attitude to realize that such accusations are generally susceptible of definite proof, one way or the other.

Good, bad or indifferent it will be necessary, in the difficult days ahead, for the president of Haverford to have ideas, and act upon them. If they are to be effective and valuable in execution those ideas must have a general conformity with Haverford traditions. Even if it seemed theoretically advisable, which is not the case, any sudden break in the established continuity of our institutional life here would be in practice disastrous. It would destroy very positive values without any assurance that they would, or could, be replaced. A definite conservatism, tinged with Quaker spirituality, is of the essence of Haverford. It would be better -- far better -- to tear down Barclay Hall than to tamper with that basic element of our communal life.

When this is accepted as axiomatic, however, a good deal still remains to be said. The ideas which underlie executive policy cannot stop short with the conclusion that the values we have must be conserved. Indeed we shall be unable to conserve them unless we also look intelligently towards the future, now being hammered out on the anvil of a war which is clearly as revolutionary as it is destructive. We may feel that our cloistered life here is ideal, and hope that we may keep it so. But when the ground beneath the cloister begins to tremble it is impossible to dream complacently within its pleasant recesses.
There is temptation nowadays to avert our eyes from the news dispatches and the dreadful accounts of ruin, degeneration and decay which they chronicle with sickening regularity. It is much more pleasant, particularly here at Haverford, to dwell on what the past has given us rather than on what the future will demand from us. But your new president believes, Mr. Leeds, that he would be deficient in the most elementary of his duties if he failed to do his utmost to anticipate the shape of things to come. And all his training, for better or worse, has made it natural for him to endeavor to look ahead.

I cannot say that at the moment the immediate prospects for our civilization seem anything but horrible. But I can say, with a faith which I believe was instilled in me here at Haverford, that even so there is to my mind no reason for weariness of spirit. The terrible prophecies of Isaiah are being fulfilled. As he foretold, the cities are wasted and the land, in many parts of the earth, is utterly desolate. But we must also remember his cryptic exhortation to those of a fearful heart: "Be strong, fear not. Behold your God will come with vengeance; with the recompense of God he will come and save you".

Haverford, as an institution, has no will or desire to play an active role in the work of destruction by which so much that is precious is now, or may be, sacrificed. For that very reason, however, our tremendous moral responsibility for service in the field of reconstruction is made the stronger. The predominant Quaker attitude towards war is a pale and negative doctrine unless it is coupled with a vital, dynamic attitude towards the problems of peace. In spite of our leadership in the magnificent work of the Friends' Service Committee, the Haverford tradition has been deficient in realistic endeavor to establish the essential conditions of a stable order. As long as that can be said, as long as the vengeance rather than the recompense of God is so apparent, complacency should have no place at Haverford.
We have made here a beautiful campus, primarily for ourselves. We are, most of us here, living worthy lives, also primarily for ourselves. There is a tendency among us to be of that type of "unco' guid" against whom Robbie Burns turned the shafts of his gentle irony. I think our well-loved college should place more emphasis on doing good and less on merely being good. Since I have spoken of the prevalence of paradoxes, let me suggest another: If we have more dissatisfaction with ourselves we shall become more satisfied with Haverford.

All this, of course, is in a sense an evasion of the issue. Very possibly you expected to be informed today concerning the specified program which I intend to follow. Some of you would like to know whether I plan to restore the Swarthmore game which, I may say for the benefit of the uninitiated, is the particular world-shaking problem which most persistently disturbs the habitual tranquility of a portion of our alumni. A word from me might also be welcome on other matters of moment in our community, such as whether or not the college paper should follow the example of its Bryn Mawr competitor by running cigarette ads.

I am sorry to have to disappoint you, for the moment, in these great expectations. Indeed I might as well admit the worst by confessing that I do not even have a program, if by that is understood a five-year plan or other blue-print of transformations to be adopted step by step. In Washington, since 1933, I have gradually become more than a little suspicious of the merit of this type of planning. And in a period of swift and sweeping change even the best-laid plans are pitiabley subject to overthrow by circumstance.

I may say, however, that absence of a detailed program does not imply a lack of policy. What I think that policy should be I have perhaps already suggested, but a little closer definition is in order. A three-point summarization will suffice to show that the line I expect to follow has its conservative, its liberal and its radical aspects, which makes it at least as well-rounded as a line can be without becoming a vicious circle.
Conservatism must of course be emphasized in every aspect of the college life where past practice has fully justified itself.

This applies to the high standards of scholarship which have become almost synonymous with the name of Haverford. It applies to the size of the college. The Haverford enrollment must remain relatively small in order to avoid the perils of mass production in education. Conservatism also applies to the character of the curriculum, which will change after rather than before the demonstration of need. Seven years ago, at the time of our centenary, much careful study was given to certain changes in our general educational plan. These developments are for the most part now established practice. Some further adjustments are desirable but basically the present Haverford Plan is well calculated to meet even the problems which we see ahead.

Conservatism also, and most emphatically, is the desirable attitude towards the intangible values, such as those afforded by Fifth Day Meeting, which generations of Haverford graduates recall with gratitude and deep appreciation. In this connection let me quote, with heartfelt approval, an admonition voiced by Rufus Jones in the history of Haverford published at the time of the centenary: "It will be well for all who have the future of this institution in their keeping to remember that the spiritual quality which its Quaker founders created here, and which has been guarded and expanded with the years, is one of the most precious assets that the college possesses; it is, in fact, the basic reality of the invisible college that we all love, and it must be kept as the consummate thing that makes Haverford so unique."

While conservative in the enduring fundamentals, the policy of the new administration at Haverford should also be as pronouncedly liberal in its daily outlook. If for no other reason, this attitude would be made desirable by the character of the times. The swift and turbulent stream of events is destined to sweep
through academic halls as well as through farms and offices and factories. It will carry with it, into oblivion, many a narrow prejudice as well as, unhappily, many a noble principle.

If we are to preserve the tested principles at Haverford we must not worry about the outworn prejudices. If we are to build for the future we must not concentrate our whole attention on the past. If we want Haverfordians to quit themselves like men in the uncertain world ahead we must not regard them as children during these precious years of training. And we must remember that mental flexibility is essential for administration and faculty alike. Perhaps it should not be said in public but it is quite conceivable that we have as much to learn from the coming generation as to impart to it.

Incidentally, while on the subject of liberalism, let me assure you that if your president finds it advisable to discuss academic freedom he will do so in such a way that no subsequent explanation, or partial retraction, will be necessary.

So Haverford must be liberal in attitude while conservative in fundamentals. In addition I think it should in certain ways be radical, in the literal sense of seeking the roots of problems and not fearing to explore their ramifications.

If common sense demands close cooperation, even integration, with neighboring colleges of kindred ideals, then neither inertia nor realization of the difficulties involved should stop action to that desirable end. If the obligations of this college to society call insistently for some service which we can render to the underprivileged, then no fear that some might instinctively oppose the development should keep it from being advocated. In addition to being careful and open-minded your new administration, Mr. Leeds, must be courageous. If it fails in this respect I think it will fail badly.

With such a policy, conservative, liberal or radical as the situation demands, concrete problems should for the most part cause no great embarrassment, particularly if approached with tact and a due consideration for human susceptibilities.
Perspective, plus flexibility in matters which submit to compromise, have always seemed to me essentials of good administration. I would especially stress the value of perspective as a wholesome corrective of that magnifying tendency which so often exaggerates a detail into the status of a major headache.

But with detail and its headaches we are not here today concerned. And happily we need not at the moment be concerned, except in a general way, with the pitiful condition of the world and the more responsive outlook which a stormy future renders strongly advisable for all American colleges. The policy of Haverford, after all, will be decided not by what I say here this morning, but by the way in which our problems are met as or before they arise. And in the meeting of them I am happily conscious of the fact that I shall have, behind and over and around and under me as fine and cooperative a body — trustees, alumni, faculty and students — as can be claimed by any college president in the country.

I shall endeavor to synthesize and coordinate this support, and in particular I shall endeavor to join to it the interest of those truly forgotten men and women, the parents of students who are themselves neither alumni, faculty nor trustees; neither fish, flesh nor good red herring. If the American Legion can have a Ladies Auxiliary surely our Alumni Association can also enlist the active service of parents who are giving their sons the advantages of the Haverford training which they missed.

You have come here, I surmise, partly out of a sense of duty, partly to put a satisfactory end to the canard that I am the Morley who has grown a long red beard, and partly to have a good time. With the conclusion of my remarks the prospects of attaining the latter objective become more bright. I have only one further, brief consideration to intrude.

For all college presidents I have respect, tinctured with a sympathy which has increased enormously within the last five weeks. But for President McConaughy of Wesleyan, who is among those giving me the once-over today, I nurture a feeling
which transcends admiration.

In part this is due to the fact that he has a son who is a newspaper man, thus helping to confirm my fond belief that this profession is not necessarily too difficult and arduous for college graduates. In the second place President McConaughy openly glories in his belief that football "is our greatest American college game". I agree with that, and trust that our contest with Wesleyan this afternoon will confirm those convictions and incidentally demonstrate that he is a good loser. In the third place, and most important, it was President McConaughy who brought to my attention, before I had a chance to stick my neck out in my present job, a truly appalling piece of recent research entitled "What College Presidents Say".

In this devastating volume, compiled -- possibly out of pure malice -- by Professor Edgar W. Knight of the University of North Carolina, there is a long chapter about what college presidents say in their inaugural addresses. Moreover, though almost unbelievable, it must be true that what he says they say they said. Names, dates and places are attached. Indeed it is possible that some of those now present in this hall are quoted.

In tilting a polished lance against the Philistines this Knight does not merely quote; he also summarizes. Inaugural addresses he says, and proves his point, have three distinguishing characteristics. Incoming college presidents always ask for money, perhaps not by actually passing the hat but indirectly. They always applaud those whose burdens they pick up, frequently by referring to "the giants who have labored here". They always enter upon their own tenure with a sense of personal unworthiness, which runs a subdued chromatic scale from ordinary run-of-mine humility to that of the definitely chastened and contrite heart.

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, what I have said may not rate high as an inaugural address, but at least it should make Professor Knight add a footnote of exception in the second edition of his book. I have not asked for money, though
perhaps I might except for Knight. I haven't expressed any sense of personal
unworthiness for my new position and as a matter of fact my private judgment is
that I ought to be able to swing it reasonably well. Nor, finally, have I paid
tribute to those who have gone before.

But this I have not done only because at Haverford it is so clearly unnec-
essary. My predecessors need no feeble words of praise from me. Simple men,
honest men, upright men; men of faith and wisdom and courage -- what interest
have those clean Quaker characters in what I might say about them? Not what I
say but what I do is their concern, from William Wistar Comfort, on back through
Isaac Sharpless and Thomas Chase and Samuel Gummere and those now shadowy figures
who over a century ago selected this site for its "unquestionable salubrity".
If you seek their monument come not to me, but look about you.

I shall try not to let them down. I shall try to keep faith with them, as
with my Mother and Father, who recently came back to Haverford and now rest to-
gether beside the Meeting House, amid their friends of fifty years ago. They
loved Haverford, as all who know it must love it; as I, who was born here, have
loved it and cherished it throughout the busy years since Isaac Sharpless, during
an earlier World War, gave me an ill-deserved diploma on this very platform.

I am proud and happy, Morris Leeds, to receive this high distinction at
your hands, the more proud and the more happy because to all Haverfordians you
are so eminently an embodiment of all the best for which this college stands.
If, once or twice this morning, I have seemed a trifle more frivolous than is
becoming for a president of Haverford, you will forgive me. Out of your unfail-
ing fund of generosity please attribute any un-Quakerish ebullience to the
"unquestionable salubrity" of the Haverford atmosphere.