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Review of *Professors, Presidents, and Politicians* By George Lynn Cross

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the exercise of a reasonable amount of public authority over the institutions. In *Professors, Presidents, and Politicians*, George Lynn Cross, who served as president of the University of Oklahoma from 1943 to 1968, traces the sometimes stormy relationship between state government and higher education in Oklahoma in a discussion of civil rights issues at the University of Oklahoma from 1890 to 1968.

In its early years the University of Oklahoma was little more than a political football. Regents were dismissed summarily by governors for no cause other than political. Presidents and professors were dealt with as capriciously by the regents. Moreover, the regents assumed responsibility for the day-to-day administrative affairs of the university, sometimes hiring or firing faculty without even advising the president. Even governors on occasion interfered with university administration, as when Governor William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray issued an executive order readmitting fourteen students who had been expelled by the board of regents.

According to Cross, the turning point in the development of civil rights at the university came with the presidency of Joseph A. Brandt, who served for little more than a year in 1941-42. Brandt refused to take the position until he was satisfied with the resolution of a matter regarding severance pay of a faculty member who had been summarily dismissed by the regents. Although he did put his job on the line over the issue of faculty rights, Brandt's tenure as president was so short and was so preoccupied by World War II that he had little opportunity to exercise major influence in the area of civil rights. Cross nonetheless dedicates his history to Brandt for having introduced the concept of academic freedom and tenure to the university's governing board.

Major progress was made during the Cross administration. The years were stormy, rocked by a series of affronts to academic freedom and individual dignity: a faculty dismissal that resulted in an AAUP censorship (fairly easily removed); a legislative witch hunt for Reds on the faculty, which was diffused in part by Cross's skillful management and in part by the

Professors, Presidents, and Politicians. By George Lynn Cross. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, index. xviii + 308 pp. \$17.95.

One of the major success stories of American higher education has been the development of a positive relationship between universities and the people who support them. That relationship protects the right of professors to teach and students to learn without undue political interference and at the same time provides for

committee's blunders; a loyalty oath, which was finally declared unconstitutional; and periodic efforts to ban controversial speakers from the campus. For the most part, the president and the board handled these crises well, and the University of Oklahoma became a place where the rights of faculty and students generally are recognized and protected. Cross recognizes that, "Where human judgment is involved, there can be no perfection—only the hope of less imperfection."

Although possessing its own individuality and its unique problems, the University of Oklahoma is fairly typical of American public universities. The broad outlines of the story of the achievement of civil rights there, as this book sets them forth, could be used to describe similar achievements elsewhere.

Professors, Presidents, and Politicians is a chatty, informal, first-person account similar to Cross's three earlier "informal histories" of the University of Oklahoma. There is some documentation, but the author relies heavily on his own recollection, except for the earlier years. There he utilizes an unpublished manuscript by Roy A. Gittinger, a long-time member of Oklahoma's history department. With reference to his own contributions to the university's progress, Cross is much too modest. His book reinforces the view that a key to the quality of civil rights on the university campus is the attitude, integrity, the courage of the chief executive and the governing board.

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