INTRODUCTION

To the Members and Friends of the Oriental Institute

Having become Provost of The University of Chicago when Kenneth Dam was called away to public service in Washington early last fall, I have relinquished the directorship of the Oriental Institute well ahead of the normal end of my term. It is gratifying to know that my colleague, Janet Johnson, has agreed to succeed to the directorship. The Institute's traditions, standards and future program could not be in better hands. Yet from the somewhat broader perspective of the office I now occupy at the opposite end of the main campus quadrangle, there is no mistaking the severity of the challenges I have left behind to await her attention.

To begin with, our field expeditions embody many accelerating demands on our human as well as other resources. The collaboration with natural scientists that Robert and Linda Braidwood pioneered in the 'fifties has now become an accepted archaeological standard, requiring budgetary provision for specialists in ancient flora and fauna, in soils and climates, in architecture, and in the identification of exotic goods like obsidian or chlorite that moved over long distances in trade. Typological studies confined to complete or nearly complete artifacts have given way to quantitative analyses of bulk categories like potsherds, requiring that more personnel be sent overseas so that there can be vastly greater inputs of time for specialized processing. Computers are becoming necessary articles of field equipment, not only for such studies as these but also for the expeditious recording and processing of architectural data. The curve of what we can learn rises steeply in these ways; one can legitimately speak of an explosion in archaeological knowledge over the past generation or so. But the gap between the new demands and our capacity to meet them rises even more steeply.

Chicago House in Luxor may soon represent an even greater challenge. Its program has been one of our central concerns for virtually as long as there has been an Oriental Institute, and it surely

will be much on the mind of Professor Johnson as an Egyptologist. The prospective problem is not so much a rapid escalation of costs, although operating costs in Egypt over which we have very little control have indeed risen. But, instead, the major factor is the impending demise of the federal support for part of its work that for more than two decades has been made available through the Smithsonian Institution foreign currency program. The Epigraphic Survey continues to create a permanent, priceless record at a time when the rate of destruction of Egyptian monuments — through pollution, through salinization as a result of rising groundwater, through intensified tourism — was never greater. Somehow funds will need to be found to replace the government contribution when the latter is cut off completely after 1985.

Publications are a further source of major budgetary strain. Publication is the primary rationale of the work we do. Unless we publish our findings fully, accurately, and with reasonable promptness, we risk dissipating a considerable part of their value. The standards of the Institute's publication series have been rigorous and uniform; our volumes enjoy an enviable reputation for quality, consistency, and even for their aesthetic appeal — although less so for their timeliness. Yet how are we to meet our traditional expectations with regard to adequacy of illustration and something closely approaching editorial perfection, at a time when costs of publication in general have steadily been rising much more rapidly than the rate of inflation? One can only suppose that there will have to be technical innovations in this area, as well as well-thought-out compromises. It is becoming progressively more urgent to identify and implement them.

These three areas are only illustrative of the growing demands the Oriental Institute faces on many fronts. How can they be met? The Institute's primary strength is its faculty — surely one of the strongest, perhaps the very strongest, concentration of specialists on the ancient Near East in the world. The focused interactions of a great faculty on common themes have a serendipitous, synergistic effect in enhancing the research that the faculty conducts. Herein lies one of the Institute's most vital characteristics, one that we simply cannot afford to lose. Hence the scope of the Institute's work cannot easily be cut back to provide some relief from the mounting cost of individual programs. A concentration of specialists who can collaborate with one another may be a budgetary burden, but the more important point is that it is a permanent stimulus to academic leadership.

This is an admittedly personal view of the constraints within which the new director will need to shape a creative course of action. The details of that course you will hear in time from her. In my new role I am myself rapidly becoming a connoisseur of odd and interesting constraints, but the ones facing Professor Johnson are daunting enough for anyone. She and the Institute deserve all of the understanding and assistance you can give.

A final, sorrowful note must be taken of the passing of Elizabeth Hauser on July 29, 1983. For 39 years, from 1931 to 1970, she was the heart and soul of the Oriental Institute's publication program as its Manuscript Editor and Editorial Secretary. Her contributions to its scholarly standards, and often to the substance as well as clarity of what was published, were second to none.

Robert McC. Adams
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