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## The Indiana Education of Charles A. Beard

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Charles A. Beard, who became one of the best known and most controversial social scientists in the nation before his death in 1948 at the age of seventy-three, spent the first third of his life in the state of his birth, Indiana. During these formative years he lived on the family farm in Henry County, attended a small private academy which was under Quaker auspices, ran a weekly newspaper in Knightstown, and earned a college degree at DePauw University in Greencastle. Although he completed his professional training at Oxford, Cornell, and Columbia, and lived outside Indiana for most of the rest of his career, he often referred proudly to his Hoosier upbringing and education. Recalling in 1936 how he had helped found Ruskin Hall at Oxford during his graduate student days, Beard described himself as "an American 'from the wilds of Indiana' who had read Ruskin in the library of 'a freshwater college.'"<sup>1</sup> His Indiana background enabled him to boast of knowing "something about the frontier at first hand,"<sup>2</sup> and he used his boyhood experience to dispute the theory of frontier individualism:

I knew in my youth pioneers in Indiana who had gone into the country of my birth when it was a wilderness. My early memories are filled with the stories of log-cabin days—of community helpfulness, of coöperation in building houses and barns, in harvesting crops, in building schools, in constructing roads and bridges, in nursing the sick, in caring for widows,

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Beard, "Ruskin and the Babble of Tongues," *New Republic*, LXXXVII (August 5, 1936), 372.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Charles A. Beard to the editor, *New York Times*, January 23, 1938.

orphans and the aged. Of individuals I heard much, of individualism little. I doubt whether anywhere in the United States there was more community spirit, more mutual aid in all times of need, so little expectation of material reward for services rendered to neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

Far from claiming the Indiana frontier as the source of his political radicalism, Beard always emphasized that he was brought up in the "Federalist-Whig-Republican tradition," and did not discover that any other was possible until early manhood.<sup>4</sup>

Among those who are currently assessing the noted historian's life and work there is wide disagreement about the significance of his Indiana background. One writer has argued that little occurred during Beard's youth "to jolt and undermine his family traditions and orthodoxies," and locates his political awakening at Oxford, where he met the Kansas socialist, Walter Vrooman, with whom he was associated in founding Ruskin Hall as a workingman's college in 1899.<sup>5</sup> At the other extreme, a student of Beard's early political ideas thinks it "safe to infer" that the young DePauw graduate of 1898 had already assumed "an Indiana Populist's view of the world."<sup>6</sup> Hubert Herring and Eric F. Goldman, both of whom have drawn upon the historian's private recollections, lay stress on the Beard family's conservative Republicanism but indicate that the young college student "learned to discount his traditions" at DePauw, especially as the result of a visit to the slums of Chicago in the summer of 1896, when he met and talked with reformers like Jane Addams, John R. Commons, and Graham Taylor.<sup>7</sup> Merle Curti has also presented evidence that Colonel James Riley Weaver, a Civil War veteran and former diplomat who introduced the writings

<sup>3</sup> Beard, "The Frontier in American History," *New Republic*, XCVII (February 1, 1939), 361.

<sup>4</sup> Beard, Review of *A Constitutional History of the United States*, by Andrew C. McLaughlin, *ibid.*, XCII (September 15, 1937), 162.

<sup>5</sup> Harlan B. Phillips, "Charles Beard, Walter Vrooman, and the Founding of Ruskin Hall," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, L (April, 1951), 186.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard C. Borning, "The Political Philosophy of Young Charles A. Beard," *American Political Science Review*, XLIII (December, 1949), 1167.

<sup>7</sup> Hubert Herring, "Charles A. Beard: Free Lance Among the Historians," *Harper's Magazine*, CLXXVIII (May, 1939), 641-642; Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York, 1952), 115-116; and Goldman, "Charles A. Beard: An Impression," *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal*, ed. Howard K. Beale (Lexington, Ky., 1954), 2-3.

of Karl Marx and other unorthodox thinkers in sociology and political science classes at DePauw, may have opened the undergraduate's eyes.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Howard K. Beale seems to underrate Beard's formal training in Indiana and at Oxford, claiming that "perhaps the most important parts of his education were his experience as editor of a small-town Indiana paper and his activity in the Independent Labour Party in England."<sup>9</sup> In view of inconclusive evidence and divergent arguments thus far published, a study of the materials available for a closer examination of Charles Beard's life in Indiana may throw additional light on both his early intellectual development and his subsequent career.

Descended from North Carolina Quakers of colonial antecedents, Charles Austin Beard was born November 27, 1874, on a farm in Wayne Township, a few miles north of Knightstown, Indiana, where his father had settled after leaving the South at the beginning of the Civil War in order to remain loyal to the Union.<sup>10</sup> The family background contained more than a little of the nonconformity which was to become characteristic of Charles' own later career. His grandfather, Nathan, who had been "read out" of the Society of Friends for marrying outside the meeting, was a freethinking individualist whose large library included books by Thomas Paine and other Deists.<sup>11</sup> Of his grandmother, Caroline Beard, it was reported in 1891 that "down to the present period of her busy life she has never attached herself to any church, or subscribed to any creed."<sup>12</sup> Charles' father, William Henry Harrison Beard, named for the Whig hero elected to the presidency in the year of his birth, was a carpenter-farmer who prospered as a building contractor and a small-town banker, but raised his two sons in the hard discipline of manual labor on the family farm. Charles Beard

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<sup>8</sup> Merle Curti, "A Great Teacher's Teacher," *Social Education*, XIII (October, 1949), 263-267.

<sup>9</sup> Howard K. Beale, "Charles Beard: Historian," in *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal*, ed. Beale, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Charles A. Beard, New Milford, Conn., to Ed Kirkpatrick, assistant publisher of the *Knightstown Banner*, July 17, 1948, printed in the *Knightstown Banner*, July 23, 1948. Information about the elder Beard can be found in Inter-State Publishing Co., *History of Henry County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1884), 796-798; and B. F. Bowen (pub.), *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County, Indiana* (Logansport, Ind., 1902), 232.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ritter Beard, *The Making of Charles A. Beard* (New York, 1955), 9, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *New Castle Courier*, June 12, 1891.

later told Hubert Herring, "I had so much exercise that I have needed none since."<sup>13</sup>

In 1880 the Beards moved to another farm near Spiceland so that the children could enjoy the educational advantages of the Friends' Academy there.<sup>14</sup> In this small Quaker village, "a community of a rare spirit," young "Charley" Beard spent his school days playing baseball and football, taking part in the "battle of the walnuts" along the banks of Bezor Brook; he was occasionally entertained, as he remembered it long afterwards, by plays given by wandering troupes and by political speeches and torchlight parades. Although his parents were not practicing Quakers, they required that he sit on the hard wooden benches of the meeting house on First Day. At Spiceland Academy, surrounded by "good, moral influences,"<sup>15</sup> Charles studied Latin, history, physics, and English literature and debated current topics in the literary societies, where he attained his first reputation as a public speaker. Unable to finish with his class because of a schoolboy prank, he transferred to Knightstown High School, from which he was graduated in 1891. Seven years later, shortly before his departure for graduate study in England, the Spiceland Academy authorities granted him the belated diploma.<sup>16</sup>

In the summer of 1891 Charles Beard entered the newspaper business with his brother Clarence, when their father purchased for them the Knightstown *Sun*, at the masthead of which was the line, "Publishers: Beard Bros."<sup>17</sup> Charles had already had some printing experience, operating a small hand press on his father's Spiceland farm while Clarence

<sup>13</sup> Herring, *Harper's Magazine*, CLXXVIII (May, 1939), 642.

<sup>14</sup> The description of Beard's boyhood in Spiceland comes largely from a letter written by the historian in 1938 on the occasion of the celebration of the town's one hundredth anniversary, printed in *Souvenir Booklet of the Spiceland Centennial* (Spiceland, Ind., 1938), 15-17, and in the Knightstown *Banner*, July 22, 1938. See also page 000 of this issue for this letter.

<sup>15</sup> *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Spiceland Academy 1890-1891* (Knightstown, Ind., 1891), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Charles A. Beard, New Milford, Conn., to Ed Kirkpatrick, July 17, 1948, printed in the Knightstown *Banner*, July 23, 1948; Mrs. W. A. Hood, Spiceland, to the author, November 19, 1957; L. E. Rogers, Superintendent of Schools, Knightstown, to the author, December 17, 1957.

<sup>17</sup> New Castle *Courier*, August 7, 1891. A few copies of the Knightstown *Sun* for this period are filed in the archives of the Henry County Historical Society, New Castle, Ind., and in the office of the publisher of the Knightstown *Banner*.

was a student at Indiana University in Bloomington. The two young men made Knightstown their headquarters for nearly four years, editing and publishing a weekly newspaper that advocated prohibition and supported the Republican party, like many other small-town Indiana papers of the time. Although Charles often had to set type himself in the small shop just off the National Road where they began publication,<sup>18</sup> by the middle of 1893 the Beard brothers had prospered sufficiently to build a new brick building on West Main Street and to install improved machinery.<sup>19</sup> As the successful historian described his publishing experience years later, he " 'made it pay too.' "<sup>20</sup>

The Knightstown newspaper venture came to an end when Clarence, who was becoming deeply involved in local Indiana politics, went to New Castle to establish the *Henry County Republican*.<sup>21</sup> Although Charles acted as a part-time reporter during summer vacations for his brother's new paper, which backed McKinley and the nomination of James Watson as Republican candidate for Congress in 1896, he had already decided to enter college and enrolled at DePauw University in Greencastle in the spring of 1895, "a young man of much promise," as the *New Castle Courier* called him.<sup>22</sup> The Methodist minister in Knightstown, Asher S. Preston, an alumnus of DePauw, recognized the young editor's talents and encouraged him to seek a college education.<sup>23</sup> There is some evidence that Charles Beard at this time considered the Methodist ministry as a possible career, and the county press recorded several occasions when he was called upon to preach at local churches.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Frank E. Edwards, Ogden, Ind., a former resident of Knightstown, September 5, 1957.

<sup>19</sup> *New Castle Courier*, January 27, June 30, 1893.

<sup>20</sup> Herring, *Harper's Magazine*, CLXXVIII (May, 1939), 642.

<sup>21</sup> Bowen, *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County, Indiana*, 411-412; George Hazzard, *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana, 1822-1906* (2 vols., Logansport, Ind., 1906), II, 1093.

<sup>22</sup> *New Castle Courier*, March 15, 1895.

<sup>23</sup> Floyd J. Newby, Pacific Palisades, Calif., to the author, September 10, 1957.

<sup>24</sup> *New Castle Courier*, July 5, September 13, 27, 1895. At the time of his first appearance on the DePauw campus, according to two contemporaries who knew him, the red-headed Beard dressed in a rather florid ministerial style. Newby, Pacific Palisades, Calif., to the author, September 10, 1957; interview with James P. Hughes, Cloverdale, Ind., July 24, 1957.

At DePauw University, then a coeducational Methodist institution of about six hundred students, Beard had a distinguished record as a student of history and political science, orator, debater, and editor of the college newspaper. The *Mirage*, the student yearbook published in his senior year, mentioned him in a dozen places and named him a member of the "Big Five" along with two fellow undergraduates and two professors. His career was summarized in college yearbook fashion, "Formerly editor of a country weekly; has achieved a national reputation as a Prohibo-populistic orator; has studied much history with Dr. Stephenson." Despite the obvious caricature, the *Mirage* presents a revealing picture of the twenty-three year old senior as an aggressive nonconformist, who knew "the best methods to be employed in handling a conservative faculty, of instigating revolts and of crystallizing and directing public opinion." In a section devoted to an imaginary class meeting, the yearbook gave this exaggerated version of Beard's iconoclastic oratory:

The time has come, ladies and gentlemen, the time has come. The old traditions and fossilized methods of the past must be smashed into smithierines and consigned to chaos. Let there now be ushered in an era of unlimited, unqualified and untrammelled freedom! Away with a moss-back faculty, moth-eaten orthodoxy, and give us true democracy! I move you that we declare war upon all things that at present exist!<sup>25</sup>

Several of Beard's classmates have testified to his reputation for "radicalism" during his college years.<sup>26</sup> Although DePauw University was generally considered a stronghold of Republican orthodoxy, the effect of Charles Beard's studies there was to make the young Henry County Republican exceedingly skeptical of his inherited political faith. He spent only a little more than three years, including two summer sessions, at DePauw, but these were the critical years of the Populist ferment in the Middle West, Bryan's first candidacy for the presidency, and the United States' venture into imperialism with the Spanish-American War. Against the background of these eventful years must be placed Beard's

<sup>25</sup> *DePauw University Mirage of '99* (Indianapolis, 1898), no pagination.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas W. Nadal, Frankfort, Mich., to the author, August 7, 1957; Raymond J. Wade, Bay View, Mich., to the author, December 10, 1957; Orin DeMotte Walker, Washington, D. C., to the author, August 22, 1957.

college studies in history and the social sciences, his debating, oratorical, and editorial experience as marking points in his Indiana education where he began to deviate from Republican conservatism.

Charles Beard, who graduated in 1898 with the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy and a Phi Beta Kappa key, majored in history with related work in sociology and political science, including jurisprudence and international law. The rest of his college course consisted of English literature and oratory, zoology, psychology, and two years of German, which he chose instead of the classical languages which would have qualified him for the A.B. degree.<sup>27</sup> Although Professor Arthur R. Priest's courses in debate and oratory certainly helped the young public speaker, who found them "without equals in enabling students to do clear, logical thinking on any question,"<sup>28</sup> it was Andrew Stephenson in history and James Riley Weaver in political science who had the largest influence on Beard's youthful studies. Weaver, who was by all accounts a remarkable teacher, left a career in the American foreign service to inaugurate the empirical study of social science at DePauw. Using his own printed outlines instead of textbooks, he required his students to read widely in the literature of social and economic reform, including the writings of Marx as well as American advocates of the New Economics and the Social Gospel such as Richard T. Ely of Johns Hopkins and the University of Wisconsin. In a letter to the latter, Professor Weaver, a radical Republican in politics, indicated his unorthodox economic views by declaring, "Since my return from 16 years of consular service in 1885, I have been putting in my best licks to destroy the pernicious influence of that old Manchester school."<sup>29</sup> It was apparently Weaver's suggestion that sent Beard to Hull House and the slums of Chicago in the summer of 1896.

Unlike Weaver, a gifted amateur, Professor Andrew Stephenson was a product of the best professional graduate training in the United States, who completed his doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins University in 1891. Coming

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<sup>27</sup> Academic Record of Charles A. Beard, Registrar's Office, DePauw University.

<sup>28</sup> DePauw *Palladium*, February 28, 1898.

<sup>29</sup> James Riley Weaver, Greencastle, Ind., to Richard T. Ely, Madison, Wis., January 1, 1891. A photostat is in the DePauw University Archives; the original can be found in the Wisconsin State Library.

to DePauw in 1894, he reinforced his colleague's emphasis on the seminar method and eventually encouraged Charles Beard to continue his historical studies abroad. To Stephenson, the "blank knowledge of facts" was a "mere deposition of rubbish without cohesion."<sup>30</sup> In addition to gathering and classifying facts, the historical student must investigate the moving forces, the motives, and the moral consequences. "Viewed in this light," he wrote, "history becomes the crystallization of the endeavor of man to control his environment."<sup>31</sup> It was this kind of teaching which led Beard to choose history for his major field of study and to argue as editor of the *DePauw Palladium* for history as a required course for students of political science, oratory, and literature.<sup>32</sup> Stephenson, a registered Democrat on a Republican campus,<sup>33</sup> was a political liberal who was interested chiefly in English constitutional history and taught it according to the Teutonic-origins school, which his leading student later made a prime target of attack. That the influence of this thesis persisted amid Beard's growing dissent is shown by the college oration he delivered in his senior year in which he described how "the divine impulse of liberty, born in the German forests and crystallized in centuries of English conflict, received a new birth" in America.<sup>34</sup> The more radical temper of Stephenson's teaching was revealed, however, in the work of the "historical seminary" for 1897-1898, where Beard and other senior majors looked into "the origin and adoption of the Constitution of the United States" by "careful, comparative study of the sources."<sup>35</sup> A tantalizingly brief paragraph inserted in the *Palladium* during the progress of the seminar contains a hint that the apprentice historian may have found there the seeds of his famous *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*:

The class in United States Constitutional History is now investigating the original sources of American Nation making. There have been several dangerous explosions of ancient

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew Stephenson, *Syllabus of Lectures on European History* (Terre Haute, Ind., 1897), v.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>32</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, December 20, 1897.

<sup>33</sup> Robert M. Stephenson, Washington, D. C., to the author, October 10, 1957. Robert M. Stephenson is Professor Stephenson's son.

<sup>34</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, April 18, 1898.

<sup>35</sup> *Fifty-Ninth Year-Book of DePauw University* (Greencastle, Ind., 1897), 43.



theories, but no lives are recorded as lost—at least so far in the work. We cannot predict for the discussions of the next few days.<sup>36</sup>

Outside the classroom Beard was active in college oratory and debate, the arena in which political progressives like William Jennings Bryan and Robert M. LaFollette had won their first victories. DePauw, with a strong oratorical tradition, kept alive the memory of the persuasive voice of its own Albert J. Beveridge, who had won the interstate contest in 1885 and was moving toward position and power in the Republican party by the nineties. In a mock Republican convention in 1896, Charles Beard seconded the name of ex-President Benjamin Harrison in "the most impassioned speech of the evening," with the result that the convention chose Indiana's favorite son over McKinley for the presidential nomination.<sup>37</sup> While still a freshman, Beard won the right to represent Indiana in the national prohibition oratorical contest in Pittsburgh, where he gained the second prize of fifty dollars.<sup>38</sup> In the primaries for the regular interstate contest the next year, however, he failed to win a place but went to Indianapolis anyway as cheerleader for the supporters of the DePauw representative.<sup>39</sup> A newspaper report of his losing address revealed that he stressed both temperance and economic reform, linking together "the evils that were wrought by rum and the rum shop" with the "ill-used power of trust and monopoly."<sup>40</sup>

In his last two years at college, Beard, who as a young instructor at Columbia was to coach debate teams,<sup>41</sup> represented DePauw on the intercollegiate debating platform; as it happened, he argued for the more radical side of highly controversial subjects of the day. In 1897 he helped defeat Earlham College by a speech "rich in thought and splendid in delivery" on the negative of the proposition, "resolved,

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<sup>36</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, February 7, 1898. In the Washington's Birthday oration cited earlier, Beard praised highly the Constitutional Convention of 1787, where "the great minds of the time met with opposing political philosophy," and called the Constitution itself "the grandest document ever wrought from the experience of men." *Ibid.*, April 18, 1898.

<sup>37</sup> *Greencastle Democrat*, May 23, 1896.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, May 30, 1896.

<sup>39</sup> *DePauw Weekly*, January 19, 1897.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, November 17, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur W. MacMahon, "Charles Beard, the Teacher," *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal*, ed. Beale, 213-214.

that the Employer shall not recognize any Union or Association of the Employees."<sup>42</sup> When Earlham returned the next year to avenge its defeat, Charles Beard and his associates argued affirmatively for the income tax as "a desirable part of a scheme of taxation for the United States." According to the *Palladium*, DePauw's opponents won the debate largely by misquoting Professor Richard T. Ely against the federal income levy. The members of the losing team immediately wrote to Ely for clarification and received a reply affirming his stand in favor of the proposed tax. According to the newspaper account of the debate, Beard was certain of his theory but found himself in the awkward position of defending the "practicability of the income tax, a question about which there was evidently considerable doubt in his own mind."<sup>43</sup> The significance of Charles Beard's debating role lies not only in the nature of the issues discussed, but also in his learning to apply social and economic data from college classes and seminars to concrete issues of the day.<sup>44</sup>

Some of Beard's early public speaking took place in the evangelical pulpit, as noted earlier. In the spring of 1896 a Greencastle newspaper reported that "Rev. Chas. A. Beard" spoke on "Christ as a Man" in a small Methodist church near the college town.<sup>45</sup> Having been elected an officer of the Y.M.C.A. in his freshman year at DePauw, Beard was also a member of the "prayer band" which spent the Christmas holidays of 1896 in a preaching mission in nearby Martinsville.<sup>46</sup> One report states that he made his famous visit to Chicago during the next summer under the auspices of the Epworth League training school.<sup>47</sup> By his senior year, however, Beard showed less personal interest in, and was more critical of, organized religion. Remembering, perhaps, the latitudinarian volumes among his grandfather's books which he had read as a boy, he lamented that no copy of Colonel Robert Ingersoll's writings could be found in any of the libraries of Greencastle.<sup>48</sup> As editor of the DePauw *Palladium* in 1898 he provoked a local controversy by protesting against

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<sup>42</sup> *DePauw Weekly*, January 19, April 13, 1897.

<sup>43</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, April 11, 1898.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1897.

<sup>45</sup> *Greencastle Democrat*, April 25, 1896.

<sup>46</sup> *DePauw Weekly*, January 5, 1897.

<sup>47</sup> *Greencastle Banner Times*, July 10, 1896.

<sup>48</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, October 18, 1897.

holding the annual revival meeting at the college. Doubting the utility of religious revivals and suggesting that an explanation for them might be found in "mental pathology," Beard pointed out that DePauw was a Methodist university but not a "camp meeting." "Revival meetings," he added, "may be alright in church, but they surely have no place in a modern institution of learning."<sup>49</sup>

Fortunately for our understanding of his intellectual development in college, Beard spoke his mind vigorously in the weekly editorials he composed for the *Palladium* in his last year at DePauw. An assistant editor of the *DePauw Weekly* the previous year, he was chosen to head the staff of the new journal largely because of his earlier experience in publishing the *Knightstown Sun*.<sup>50</sup> When an anonymous letter appeared in the paper criticizing the editor's writings as "glittering generalities" in imitation of "Ram's Horn proverbs and aphorisms," a loyal reader replied that Beard was the "brainiest man" in college and suggested to the unknown critic that "had he been personally acquainted with the editor, had he known him in class room and debate, had he known the philosophy of life and effectiveness behind those editorials he would hardly have called them imitations."<sup>51</sup> In the first issue Charles Beard promised strong editorial leadership. "It is our purpose to tell the truth, regardless of opinions or consequences," he wrote. Asking for similarly plain-spoken contributions, he added, "Express your sentiments fearlessly on any question—religious, social or political—and let the world know that there are men in DePauw who can think deeply and write in 'words hard as cannon balls.'"<sup>52</sup>

The young editor had a great deal to say about the vocation which he had already chosen for himself. "The true scholar," he wrote in an early editorial, "does not seek truth for truth's sake, but that he may pour it out into life's great current to uplift and inspire a burden stricken humanity."<sup>53</sup> Criticizing certain unnamed members of the DePauw

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1898. Beard continued to comment editorially on the advantages of reasonableness and common sense in religion. *Ibid.*, March 28, 1898.

<sup>50</sup> *Greencastle Banner Times*, October 8, 1897.

<sup>51</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, November 8, 15, 1897.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1897.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, October 25, 1897.

faculty, he described the ideal professor as "full of the spirit of youth."<sup>54</sup> With a nod to some of his own college mentors, he declared, "What a teacher is and not what he knows is the measure of his value as an educator. A few dollars will buy an encyclopedia; the magic of personal influence cannot be bought."<sup>55</sup> He praised the seminar method as "one of the best thought producers in the educational world" and predicted that the new scholarship would revolutionize men's outlook upon the world. Beard went on to say,

The critical and scientific schools which are beginning to dominate in every institution of learning are fast bringing in a new regime of thought. With blasts of iconoclasm the new methods are sweeping away old idols and superstitions. This is however the true method of study and research. But one question now arises. What is to be the result of this unsettled condition of affairs? We lay no claim to prophesy but we believe that an age of thought-revolution is near at hand—a thought-revolution which will shake the foundation of even rock-founded institutions. However, the world moves.<sup>56</sup>

Since Beard's editorial pronouncements contain surprisingly little comment on politics, it is difficult to trace the development of his political attitudes during his college years. He arrived in Chicago in the summer of 1896 too late to visit the Democratic National Convention and on his return to Indiana reported cryptically that nearly all the working men of the city favored McKinley and protection.<sup>57</sup> Mary Ritter Beard, who was also at DePauw in those years, has stressed Bryan's influence on her future husband.<sup>58</sup> Beard undoubtedly heard the silver-tongued Democratic candidate speak at a Greencastle rally in October, 1896, where DePauw students, despite their predominantly Republican complexion, behaved with more dignity than did the Yale boys on the occasion of the Great Commoner's appearance in New Haven earlier in the year.<sup>59</sup> That fall, moreover, Beard was on the staff of the *DePauw Weekly*, which gave editorial support to former professor John Clark Ridpath, the popular historian, who

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1897.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1, 1897.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, March 7, 1898.

<sup>57</sup> *Greencastle Banner Times*, August 13, 1896.

<sup>58</sup> Mary R. Beard, *The Making of Charles A. Beard*, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> *DePauw Weekly*, October 27, 1896.

ran for Congress on a combined Democratic-Populist ticket.<sup>60</sup> Many years later, Charles Beard remembered the heated discussions about free silver, the income tax, and other political issues which he and his Phi Gamma Delta fraternity brothers engaged in at the time.<sup>61</sup>

In April, 1898, popular clamor over the sinking of the *Maine* and the outbreak of the Spanish-American War provided editorial ammunition for the young college journalist. Soon after the declaration of war, while not directly opposing the use of force, Beard attempted to moderate the war spirit on campus:

How an intelligent, rational man can actually be anxious for war, with all its dire consequences, is beyond comprehension. War may be a quick road to the heights of fame for the brave and capable man, but it is one where he must mount over the bodies of his comrades—it is a gory path to glory.<sup>62</sup>

In the next issue of the *Palladium* he congratulated his fellow students upon the "absence of the cheap patriotism and jingoism which have been so prevalent at many other institutions," but added that at the proper time "our boys will march bravely to the front without any flourish of trumpets or blazing bonfires." As a matter of fact, fifty students had formed a volunteer company and marched off to Indianapolis, where they eventually discovered that their services were not needed.<sup>63</sup> Beard, remaining calm, argued that there was no reason "at the present status of the war" for students to quit their classes and rush to the colors.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, November 10, 1896; Clifton J. Phillips, "John Clark Ridpath, DePauw Teacher and Historian," *DePauw Alumnus*, XXII (December, 1957), 3.

<sup>61</sup> In an interview years later with a representative of Phi Gamma Delta, Beard remembered discussing free silver, the income tax, and other political issues with fraternity brothers in Greencastle. "What a crowd of stark individualists we were," he recalled. "Every fellow was a fighting personality. We were all full of steam and conceit." James A. Farrell, "America's Eminent Historian," *DePauw Alumnus*, IV (January, 1940), 4.

<sup>62</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, April 25, 1898.

<sup>63</sup> I have not been able to discover when Beard himself volunteered for service, as related in Herring, *Harper's Magazine*, CLXXVIII (May, 1939), 642, and Mary R. Beard, *The Making of Charles A. Beard*, 15. Apparently he was not among the company described above, according to the recollections of two fellow students. Newby to the author, Pacific Palisades, Calif., September 18, 1957; Wilbur Helm, Evanston, Ill., to the author, October 14, 1957.

Neither a pacifist nor an imperialist, he kept his balance in a time of nationalistic enthusiasm by reminding his readers:

The duties of peace are as sacred as those of war. The courage of the citizen must be no less than that of the soldier, and those who remain behind preparing themselves for the broader duties of private life are pursuing as commendable a course as those who have gone to the field. Should the tide of war turn against us, and the call for large numbers of soldiers be renewed then it should be the duty of the student to don the trappings of war and fight for the country.<sup>64</sup>

By his last year at college, Charles Beard saw himself not as a political actionist, but as a hard-headed student of society who looked to penetrating scholarship and historical research for the answers to social problems. Although he gave editorial support to the well-known preacher of the Social Gospel, George D. Herron, who visited Greencastle in the spring of 1898,<sup>65</sup> Beard mercilessly attacked the socialist lecturer, J. Stitt Wilson, for stirring up "the masses by a vision of an unattainable state of society." Citing the failure of utopian social experiments, he argued that "political economy based upon actual facts and not ideals" showed that "communistic visions are only the nightmares of disturbed dreamers."<sup>66</sup> It was the scholar's responsibility, whether in religion or in politics, Beard thought, to dig down deeply into the facts in order to enlighten and liberate the popular mind.

In the last issue of the *Palladium* under his editorship, with Oxford, Ruskin Hall, Columbia, and a long career of iconoclastic historical work before him, he summed up his Indiana education and set forth his vision of the "truth that makes men free":

There is but one way to know the truth, and that is not a golden one. It is fraught with toil and sacrifice and perhaps ridicule. The seeker of the truth must be fearless. He must not be afraid to enter the innermost holy of holies, and to tear down the veils of superstition that hang about every human, and so called divine institution. Folly, hero-worship and sentiment have woven about every institution webs of mysticism and superstition. . . . Around the forms of the church people cling with the tenacity of drowning men, as though to question the creeds of Wesley or Calvin, would be profanity. Politicians bow down before the constitution of the

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<sup>64</sup> *DePauw Palladium*, May 2, 1898.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, May 2, 1898.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, January 17, 1898.

United States as though it were sacred while history tells us that this crowned constitution with its halo has been the bulwark of every great national sin—from slavery to monopoly. It is the truth that makes men free. If the truth tears down every church and government under the sun—let the truth be known. And this truth only will be known when men cease to swallow the capsules of ancient doctors of divinity and politics, and when men begin to seek the truth in the records of history, politics and religion and science. Let the new school triumph!<sup>67</sup>

Beard's Indiana education, though it did not make him the Populist which some of his fellow students at DePauw and one recent writer thought him, certainly loosened his ties with the orthodox Federalist-Whig-Republican tradition in which he had been brought up. Raised in a family that was free-thinking in religion if not in politics, Charles Beard learned at a Quaker school and a Methodist college to become skeptical of all orthodoxies and to use the tools of historical analysis to investigate and question such venerated institutions as the Constitution of the United States. During these youthful years, as in much of his later life, Beard preferred the role of iconoclast to that of advocate of a particular political or economic creed. As an independent-minded student, editor, and debater at DePauw University, he capped his Indiana education and prepared for the intellectual ferment of Oxford and Columbia by discovering his enthusiasm for iconoclastic scholarship and controversy which he was never afterwards to lose.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, May 17, 1898. In the same issue of the *Palladium*, editor Beard announced with some pride that the student journal had paid all its bills and was on a firm financial foundation.