

Henry J. Bruton (1921-2013)

All of us here miss Henry acutely. But no one feels that loss more painfully than Frances. And so we want you in particular, Frances, to know of our love and support for you at this special time of need,

I have never known anyone who exemplified more completely than Henry the virtues of both localism and globalism. His globalism was legendary. He was at home in so many cultures and countries. And that's why he was so effective, admired, and loved in so many different parts of the world.

Near the end of his administration, President Baxter endorsed the proposal for the Center for Development Economics that came out of the thinking of Emile Despres, Kermit Gordon, Vincent Barnett, Bill Gates, Bob Brooks and other members of the Williams faculty. Shortly before the epochal decision to establish the CDE, President Baxter had led the college in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Haystack Prayer Meeting at the fall convocation in 1956. Baxter took the Haystack Sesquicentennial very seriously. The principal speaker was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who grew up in China as the son of missionaries. I'm confident that Baxter saw the CDE as a mid-20th century manifestation of the same impulse that led the five students in 1806 to respond to important human needs with a global outreach program attuned to the mind-set of that era.

If Henry had been around in 1806, it's easy to imagine that the five Haystack students might have gone to him for advice on their audacious dream. Sam Mills, the most out-front member of the group, after briefly describing their plan, might have said, "So that's what we have in mind. What do you think?" And Henry would probably have answered, "Just make sure that you spend more time looking and learning and listening than in telling and teaching. Don't assume that your ideas about

what people want and need are better than their own.” And, as a matter of fact, the missionaries did a pretty good of listening to the people they sought to help, as many ethnographic and linguistic studies demonstrated. Their good works included innumerable schools and hospitals.

But let’s come back to Henry the localist.

Henry was such an engaged and interested campus citizen and so trusted by his colleagues that presidents and others routinely turned to him for advice.

Let me take you back to some additional ancient Williams history. Bill Gates and I were members of the ad hoc committee that in 1964-65 proposed the curriculum structure that the faculty adopted and which is still in effect. Winter Study was the most controversial part of the proposal. And although no one voted against Winter Study, those of us behind the proposal knew there was a lot of polite skepticism and that there had to be a determined effort to establish the credibility of Winter Study if it was to realize its potential. As Classics Professor Maurice Avery used to remind me pointedly, WSP, the shorthand for Winter Study Program, really meant “Work Stoppage Program.” I knew that many faculty members privately agreed with “Spike” Avery’s jaundiced view of Winter Study.

To keep Professor Avery’s forecast from coming true, President Jack Sawyer appointed Henry chair of the Winter Study Committee. The committee insured that the approved offerings conformed to the guidelines for the program. The Williams Winter Study Program was widely imitated nationally, and the way Williams did it became the model. Then the OPEC Oil Embargo hit in 1973, and many colleges at first suspended winter study as an energy-saving measure and then simply let it wither away. But not at Williams, where Winter Study is stronger then ever after forty-five years. The difference was Henry.

When the idea of a center for the humanities and the social sciences was gathering interest during my administration, I asked Henry to take leadership in determining the feasibility and envisioning the programs of such a center. The eventual result was the splendid Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Presidents Oakley and Schapiro looked to Henry for leadership on developing the tutorial program that is now a hallmark of a Williams education. The list goes on and on. Henry's unfailing good humor, his searching honesty, and his forthright willingness to challenge conventional wisdom are qualities that will continue to enrich the lives of all of us who were privileged to know and work with him. To the very end of his long life, Henry was always refreshingly on top of the important issues, both local and global. He was, indeed, forever young.

John W. Chandler

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