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### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

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*The Statesman and the Politician.*

*F. Harry Coffey*  
*Carlisle*  
*Pa.*

7p

In all ages and under all forms of government the rulers of the world have been divided into two distinct classes. First, those who rule for the good of the whole community and devote themselves wholly and unreservedly to the service of the State. Second, those who seek office solely for the sake of the opportunities which it affords for bene-fitting themselves and whose motto is, first self, second party, third the state. To be a statesman, in the true sense of the word, requires certain qualities which are seldom found combined in the same individual.

The varied nature of the questions which come within the province of the statesman for his solution, requires, in the first place, that he should be a thoroughly educated man, who is able to grasp, comprehensively, the bearing of every point in question and to give it a direction suitable to his purpose. He should be a man of indomitable energy and will, who will not yield to any difficulties or dangers but by perseverance will conquer all obstacles. He should be a man of the strictest integrity and honor, whose character will stand the fiercest storms of investigation and who will pass through the fire of party strife and come out from the furnace, like refined gold, all the purer.

He must be a prophet gifted with the power of foreseeing consequences. It has been said that coming events cast their shadows before them, he must be able to discern these shadows - learn their meaning and from them to forecast the events themselves. The statesman, in short, must be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians - he must be as wise as the serpent but not as harmful as the dove - he must ever be on the alert to discover and prevent all the snares of his adversaries. Examples of statesmen in these times are very scarce but there are some men, such as Bismark, Gladstone and our own lamented Lincoln who have raised themselves to this level. Going further back into history we have such names as Pericles and Cleon in the old world and Washington, Adams and Franklin in the new. In the history of every country there have been periods in which its greatest men seem to have lived contemporaneously. Thus in England, in the great Elizabethan era, we have such men as Shakespeare, Spenser and Bacon, all living at the same time. In Germany, the greatest philosophers and poets which that country has ever produced, Goethe and Schiller, lived

in the same age. On the other hand there are periods in the history of every nation which seem to have been devoid of all great men and in which men of mediocrity were at the head of affairs. Such an era seems to have dawned upon America at the present time. This is without doubt the age of politicians and of money-grabbers whose sole aim in life seems to be self-aggrandizement. Instead of pondering over the destinies of the nation the chief business of the public men of our day seems to be the investigation of each others characters - the discovery of the biggest thief - the greatest bribe-taker among them. If one of the old revolutionary patriots could rise from his grave and visit our national legislative halls, what a pitiable sight would meet his vision. Instead of hearing a debate on some great question of national interest, he would hear some such speech as this, "Mr. Speaker, I rise to explain how I came into possession of certain stocks and bonds", or this, "Mr. Speaker, I move the appointment of a committee to investigate certain charges of bribery and corruption against A. B. Corcoran by arrangement and sorrow he would draw his grave-clothes around him and silently sink back to his tomb,

dreading contact with the pollution-laden air  
of the upper world. Times of public calamity  
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late civil war, into which our country was  
plunged for five long years, gave birth to a  
large number of these men. They, seeing in this  
a good opportunity for benefitting themselves  
at the expense of the nation and adopting as  
their motto "make hay while the sun shines",  
immediately set about the accomplishment  
of their nefarious purposes. The profession of  
politician, as we see it exemplified at the  
present day, does not require any of those  
fine qualities of mind and heart such as are  
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shrewdness and a great amount of skill  
in manipulating political conventions and  
elections. The politicians of the present day  
are divided into several grades - from the  
common ward politician up to him who  
is said to carry the vote of a great state  
in his breeches pocket. The trade of politics  
can not exist without more or less corruption.  
If there are parties in a state it must be  
governed by one set of principles or another and  
the politician must be always trimming his

sails to suit whatever breeze is blowing. Thus he is continually changing his principles to suit his interests and a man without any fixed principles to guide him is sure to become dishonest and corrupt. Another element of corruption lies in the apathy of the people - their lack of interest in that which concerns the public welfare most of all, the selection of the wisest and best men for our public officers. Immersed in the toils and cares of business they become forgetful of their country and their duty towards it and leave its most sacred interests to the tender mercies of a corrupt minority. If the people would only arouse themselves from this death-like lethargy and throw off the shackles which bind them down to their idol of money-making, what a sorry day it would be for the politicians and what a happy deliverance for America. Until this shall be accomplished never can we say with truth "America, the land of the free and the home of the brave." Still another element of corruption is to be found in the very constitution itself, which, we think, limits the terms of some of the officers to too short a period. According to its provisions the longest term of office can

not exceed four years. During this period the incumbent is generally more concerned with securing his own re-election than with attending to the interests of his constituents and from the lack of his oversight corruption flourishes among his subordinates. This shortness of the terms of office may also furnish a reason for the scarcity of true statesmen among our public officers. Statesmen are the results of development and experience and to acquire both these time is necessary. As we are about entering on the one hundredth year of our national existence, it seems to be a most suitable time to rectify our mistakes and start anew on another course. Let us pull up the weeds - remove the rust from the wheels, - oil the machine thoroughly and try it again. Let us insist that honesty and intelligence shall be necessary qualifications for office; then and no sooner will our system of government cease to be a by word and a reproach among the nations of the earth. As the doctor and the lawyer must undergo a course of special training in order to fit them for usefulness in their professions so must also the statesman. Let schools



of political science be established and let us have men trained in the science and art of government. The future of America depends upon the more thorough education of her ruling classes and as soon as this is accomplished a new era will dawn upon us and we will be ready to assume our natural position at the head of the nations of the earth.

Commencement Oration of F. Harry Hoffer, Class of 1876  
Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, May 2008  
Edited by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, June 2008

### The Statesman and the Politician

In all ages and under all forms of government the rulers of the world have been divided into two distinct classes. First, those who rule for the good of the whole community and devote themselves wholly and unreservedly to the service of the State. Second, those who seek office solely for the sake of the opportunities which it affords for benefitting themselves and whose motto is, first self, second party, third the state. To be a statesman, in the true sense of the word, requires certain qualities which are seldom found combined in the same individual. The varied nature of the questions which come within the province of the statesman for his solution, require, in the first place, that he should be a thoroughly educated man, who is able to grasp, comprehensively, the bearing of every point in question and to give it a direction suitable to his purpose. He should be a man of indomitable energy and will, who will not yield to any difficulties or dangers but by perseverance will conquer all obstacles. He should be a man of the strictest integrity and honor, whose character will stand the fiercest storms of investigation and who will pass through the fire of party strife and come out from the furnace, like refined gold, all the purer.

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sails to suit whatever breeze is blowing. Thus he is continually changing his principles to suit his interests and a man without any fixed principles to guide him is sure to become dishonest and corrupt. Another element of corruption lies in the apathy of the people – their lack of interest in that which concerns the public welfare most of all, the selection of the wisest and best men for our public offices. Immersed in the toils and cares of business they become forgetful of their country and their duty towards it and leave its most sacred interests to the tender mercies of a corrupt minority. If the people would only arouse themselves from this death-like lethargy and throw off the shackles which bind them down to their idol of money-making, what a sorry day it would be for the politicians and what a happy deliverance for America. Until this shall be accomplished never can we say with truth "America, the land of the free and the home of the brave." Still another element of corruption is to be found in the very constitution itself, which, we think, limits the terms of some of the offices to too short a period. According to the provisions the longest term of office can

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