



IN MEMORIAM

Clark Kerr

Professor of Business Administration, Emeritus, UC Berkeley
Chancellor, Emeritus, UC Berkeley
University of California President, Emeritus
1911 – 2003

Clark Kerr died on December 1, 2003, at his El Cerrito home overlooking the San Francisco Bay Area and the University of California, Berkeley campus. As Sheldon Rothblatt wrote shortly after, “He had always appeared indestructible, his intellectual powers invariably on automatic pilot. He survived nasty attacks from the political left and right, and overcame the humiliation of an abrupt dismissal from office by the Board of Regents. At his death, his renown was never greater.” (“Crosstalk” [National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education], 12(1), Winter 2004, p. 2.)

Kerr’s professional interests were mainly in three areas. His academic fields were economics and industrial relations; he had a second career as a skilled labor management negotiator and arbitrator; his worldwide reputation, however, was largely based on his work as an academic administrator whose final years were mostly devoted to research and writing on higher education in its American and worldwide contexts.

Kerr received his bachelor’s degree from Swarthmore College in 1932, where he also joined the Society of Friends, a lifelong commitment. After receiving his master’s degree at Stanford University in 1933 and his doctorate (all in economics) in 1939 from the University of California, Berkeley, he taught at the University of Washington for five years and was heavily engaged in ensuring industrial peace during World War II as vice chairman of the 12th Regional War Labor Board.

He was one of the founders of the professional association in his chosen academic field, the Industrial Relations Research Association. He was also a major contributor, perhaps the major contributor, to two major streams of industrial relations research and theory: (a) the so-called “California School” or “neo-classical revisionist” approach, which tried to bridge the two major then-current economics camps, the neoclassical and the institutional; and (b) “Industrialism and Industrial Man,” probably the first theoretically oriented study in what is now known as comparative international industrial relations. He continued to pursue this theme throughout his life (see, e.g., *The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983]).

In 1945, he returned to Berkeley as director of its newly-founded Institute for Industrial Relations. When the infamous loyalty oath controversy arose in 1949, Kerr was a member of a relatively unimportant Academic Senate Committee on Privilege and Tenure, a committee that rapidly became central in the dispute. As a result of his efforts during that heated time, Kerr became well-known as a voice of reason, a calm negotiator and an able conciliator. When, in 1952, the Regents established the new position of chancellor at Berkeley, Kerr appeared the best choice to the Berkeley faculty, to then-President Robert Sproul, and to the Board of Regents.

During his six- year term as Berkeley's first chancellor, Kerr set to work to repair the damage done by the oath controversy. As described in the first volume of his memoirs, Chancellor Kerr concentrated on building faculty excellence and planning for the academic and physical growth of the campus that would be needed shortly as the "tidal wave" of students — the first of the "baby boomers"— was expected to inundate higher education beginning in the early 1960s.

In 1958, Robert Gordon Sproul, UC's president since 1930, retired and Clark Kerr was selected to replace him. As president, Kerr led the development of the California Master Plan for Higher Education (enacted in 1960) which provided for orderly growth among the state's three public segments of higher education and also included the private sector in planning for the oncoming surge of students. He oversaw the administrative decentralization of the University of California, turning over most day- to- day decision- making to the campuses, under general universitywide policies. The staff of the Office of the President was reduced by 750 persons whose positions were returned to the campuses.

Developments during Kerr's presidency included building, staffing, and opening three new UC university campuses, at Santa Cruz, San Diego, and Irvine. The existing units at Davis, Santa Barbara, and Riverside became "general" campuses, offering them equal opportunities with other campuses to engage in graduate work and research. Unlike many state systems, there would be no "flagship" campus within the University of California; similar faculty structures, admissions requirements, and expectations for excellence would be provided for all. In that vein, the University of California, Los Angeles, was given what Kerr referred to as "a place in the sun," receiving equal resources with Berkeley in most areas.

Among other innovations, Kerr sponsored a universitywide library plan, increased the number of UC medical schools from two to five (and turned the University of California, San Francisco, from a local medical school into a leading medical research facility), enhanced facilities for student engagement in social and athletic life, established an Education Abroad Program, developed a Natural Reserve Program, and encouraged programs for arts and culture on the campuses.

While Kerr concentrated on improvements that would lead the American Council on Education, in its 1964 ranking of American research universities, to declare Berkeley to be both the most "distinguished" and the "best balanced" in the nation, political developments in the state and nation brought that campus the more dubious distinction of being the first to suffer major student disruptions.

Throughout his tenure as chancellor and president, Kerr had been under more or less constant attack from the political right wing in California and its legislature, led by State Senator Hugh Burns, chair of the senate's Un- American Activities committee. Burns's views were echoed by those of J. Edgar Hoover, longtime director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who once wrote at the bottom of a memo, "I know Kerr is no good...."

But in the fall of 1964 the attacks on Kerr and the university's administration came from the political left in the guise of the so- called Free Speech Movement. Throughout the remainder of his service as UC's president, Kerr would contend with forces from both the left and the right, many actively engaged in attempts to oust him from his position. After the election in fall 1966 which brought Ronald Reagan to California's governorship, membership on the Board of Regents shifted to the right, and on January 20, 1967, Kerr was abruptly dismissed. Later he stated that he left the presidency of the university as he had entered it, "fired with enthusiasm."

Kerr was not long unemployed, almost immediately becoming the chair and research director for the newly established Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. In 1973 that organization was transformed into the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, again chaired by Kerr. During the 13 years of the Commission and Council, over 140 volumes of research and commentary on higher education were produced, many written or drafted by Kerr himself, comprising the most complete examination of higher education ever produced.

After the Carnegie series was completed in late 1979, Kerr continued to write both on industrial relations and higher education, including studies of university administration and governance for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, and culminating in his two- volume memoir of his life as a UC faculty member and administrator, completed shortly before his final illness (*The Gold and the Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California 1949-1967*. Volume I: Academic Triumphs (2001); Volume

II: Political Turmoil (2003); University of California Press).

Perhaps Kerr's best known book is *The Uses of the University* (Harvard University Press), based on his 1963 Godkin Lectures at Harvard and updated with additional chapters and republication every decade (1963, 1972, 1982, 1995, and 2001). In it he popularized the term "the multiversity" to characterize the modern research university. Other important publications included *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (1960, 1973 [Pelican revised ed.]), 1975 [*Industrialism and Industrial Man Reconsidered*]), written with others of the team that made up the Inter-University Study of Labor Problems in Economic Development; and *Marshall, Marx, and Modern Times* (1969).

Kerr served not only the university but also his country, as a member of numerous committees (among others, President Eisenhower's Commission on National Goals, President Kennedy's Advisory Committee on Labor Management Policy) and as chair of the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam. He was a member of the board of trustees/ directors of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Swarthmore College, the American Council on Education, and the Work in America Institute (again — among others).

In 1964 he received the Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Contributions to Academic Freedom, awarded by the American Association of University Professors, and in 1968 he was the first recipient of the Clark Kerr Award for extraordinary and distinguished contributions to the advancement of higher education, presented by the Berkeley Division of UC's Academic Senate. He received numerous honorary degrees from universities in the United States and abroad.

Kerr was an avid gardener, taking special interest in cultivating an array of flowers for his wife to enjoy, and apple trees. He claimed that, as a boy on his family's Pennsylvania farm, he could recognize 50 species of apple trees by sight — even in the winter, after they had lost their leaves. Pennsylvania State University named its antique apple orchard in his honor, a tribute he especially treasured. He is also memorialized by buildings on UC's campuses named for him, but the living tribute pleased him more. Kerr was the quintessential "egg-head," both physically and intellectually, but possessed a strong sense of humor that enlivened both his conversation and his writings. He claimed, for example, that during his university presidency, he would take out his frustrations on the weeds in his garden, naming a small weed after a student who was giving him trouble; a larger weed would be called by the name of an annoying faculty member; and as he yanked it out, he would name the largest weed for a recalcitrant regent.

He was devoted to his family, and when one of his sons moved to western Australia, he visited every year to help with constructing farm structures and bringing in the crops.

Clark Kerr is survived by his wife, the former Catherine Spaulding, whom he met at Stanford, and his three children and their spouses, as well as seven grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Marian L. Gade
George Strauss