IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT H. MONTGOMERY

Robert H. Montgomery was born in Blanco County, Texas, on January 8, 1893, the tenth of twelve children in the family of a frontier, circuit-riding Methodist minister. In his early years he received the usual training available to the youth of that region—sporadic formal education, vocational instruction in cotton picking, cattle punching, and similar occupations—and, in addition, self-instruction through his own curiosity as to the nature of the society and the world in which he lived. At the age of twenty he enrolled at Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos; his studies there were interrupted by World War I, in which he served as a combat aviator with the U.S. Army. After the war he attended the University of Kansas, where he received the B. A. degree; he obtained the M. A. degree at the University of Texas, and he was awarded the Ph.D. by the Robert Brookings Graduate School in Washington, D. C. in 1926.

Dr. Montgomery's membership in the faculty of the University of Texas began in 1922 as an Instructor in the Department of Economics and Sociology. He retained this affiliation, with successive promotions in rank to that of Professor of Economics (in 1928) until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1963.
At various periods in this service he was on leave for teaching at the University of Kansas, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Pittsburgh, and for government service on other occasions, principally during World War II, when he served as Chief of the Economic Objectives Division, Board of Economic Warfare, of the Foreign Economic Administration. After his retirement from the University of Texas faculty he moved to San Marcos, where he and Mrs. Montgomery lived until his death on June 6, 1978.

Dr. Montgomery's early academic interests were in mathematics and science, interests which he retained throughout his life. But, as he matured, the focus of these interests came to rest more and more on the study of the massive cultural and economic changes occurring in the world as it evolved from the frontier society he had experienced as a child and young man. His attention shifted to the understanding of the nature and causes of these changes and the appropriate methods, within the American democratic traditions, by which necessary institutional adjustments could be made. As his friend and colleague J. Frank Dobie said of him, "he spent the best years of his life trying to understand change and think out the wisest ways to meet it." This effort became, indeed, the prevailing passion of his life—to study and understand the forces of change, to pass his ideas and thoughts along to others who would, in turn, be motivated to participate in this process. With this passion and his unique talents as teacher, such aims dominated his life and
worked their influence on the thousands who were students in the classroom and the audiences in the scores of lectures he gave each year across the country. His university teaching was conducted under numerous course titles, as his specific interests varied through the years: American Economic History, Agricultural Economics, Public Utility Economics, Transportation, Social Control of Industry, and (the course where he reached the largest number of students) Corporation Finance. Dr. Montgomery's own version of his course offerings was that he gave only two: "Montgomery Elementary" and "Montgomery Advanced."

Some of his courses, at the graduate level, had an appropriately small enrollment, but most of them had students to the limits of the rooms in which they were held, so that in the days immediately after World War II the only place on the campus which could accommodate his Corporation Finance course was Hogg Auditorium, filled to capacity. But whatever the course title, whatever the material covered, a class with Dr. Montgomery was always one stirred, enlightened, and agitated by his presentations. These classes seldom ended without much of the membership crowded around the desk or lectern, anxious to continue and extend the discussion, raise questions, and challenge the provocative professor. Many would follow him to his office to carry on speculation and debate with this man so skilled in opening vistas hitherto unthought of and in questioning ideas long held but never examined. These were surely among Dr. Montgomery's happiest moments as he watched such evidence of his impact as a teacher.
Dr. Bob, as thousands of students came to know and call him, also enjoyed and made himself available for many of the lecture opportunities which came to him from all sections of the country. He spoke to professional associations, conventions, and other meetings of teachers, business groups, labor unions, farmers, and college students. Dozens of such occasions were fitted into his schedule each year. The only type of meeting which he invariably refused to address was the commencement exercise, largely because such an occasion was one where ceremony tended to inhibit critical thought, with no opportunity for members of the audience to respond to and question the speaker. Otherwise he seldom refused a chance to carry on discussions, as he once wrote, "with anyone who will lay his prejudices on the table and try to talk sense about the problems that face our sorely bedevilled world."

All of these educational activities were done by Dr. Bob, both in and out of the classroom, with great artistry and verve. He was aware, with good reason, of his unusual talents, but he had, at the same time, an amiable skepticism about the effects of his efforts, as he had for many other matters, including that of education in general, which he often spoke of as "a process of wearing away marble with an art gum eraser."

Such skepticism doubtless served him well on many an occasion. There was, for example, the time when he was called before a Legislative committee of the State of Texas in the 1930's so that it might examine the source of heretical doctrines
reportedly disseminated by this "wild man" from the University of Texas. Far from being intimidated by this summons, Dr. Bob deftly used the opportunity to display and explain his deeply-felt beliefs in democracy, constitutional processes, private property, and other such basic elements of American political and economic life, as well as his understanding (which not many legislators seemed to have) that these institutions must be intelligently adjusted to the requirements of a world in which there was rapid and massive scientific and technological change. In comment on his belief in private property, for instance, he pointed out that he thought so highly of it that he wanted to insure that everyone should have some. The students who had crowded the hearing chamber appreciated Dr. Bob's points; his inquisitors may or may not have, but the inquisition terminated without adverse action toward the intended victim. Art gum had made, perhaps not permanently, some mark on Texas legislative granite.

Dr. Montgomery's greatest interest and pleasure were, as we have noted, in educating by means of personal appearances in and out of the classroom. But he was, in addition, a frequent and effective user of the written word to this end through much of his career. In these efforts he usually preferred to address an audience larger than that of his fellow economists, and most of his articles and books were therefore concerned with examination and analysis of current public policy in the areas of social control of industry, agricultural programs, public utility regulation, and the problems of depression and prosperity. On
occasion, however, he turned his attention to more abstruse matters. In the late 1930's he published a series of articles in The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science which dealt with the marginal-cost pricing principle, long a matter of great interest to economic theorists; this series was instrumental in stimulating a revival and extension of the applicability of this principle as an analytical technique. Many economists engaged in further consideration and discussion of the points at issue over the next several years. A major review of the work done in this period on the marginal-cost pricing principle concluded that the Montgomery approach, pointing out that the principle would most properly be limited to the electric power and railroad industries, was the major contribution which had emerged from the entire discussion.

Dr. Montgomery is survived by his wife, nee Gladys Rupp, his companion in marriage for fifty-five years. All who knew this charming and gracious couple recognized and were impressed with her beauty, intellect, and love of life. As Dr. Montgomery himself so often pointed out, his accomplishments were in great part what they were because of his having her as a lifelong partner. The students, colleagues, and friends who were fortunate enough, as were so many, to visit with them in their charming homes, first on San Pedro Street and later in their distinctive residence northwest of Austin, "Cuatro Vientos," will always recall with affection and pride the wonderful hours spent there with Bob and Gladys. These experiences are treasured memories
for the guests; Bob and Gladys will always be recalled together by all who knew them. Few couples, surely, have had as happy, zestful, and rewarding journey through life as this one had.

Lorene L. Rogers
(Lorene L. Rogers), President of The University of Texas at Austin

Bill D. Francis
(Bill D. Francis), Secretary The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Carey C. Thompson (chairman), Wendell C. Gordon, and Clifton M. Grubbs.