

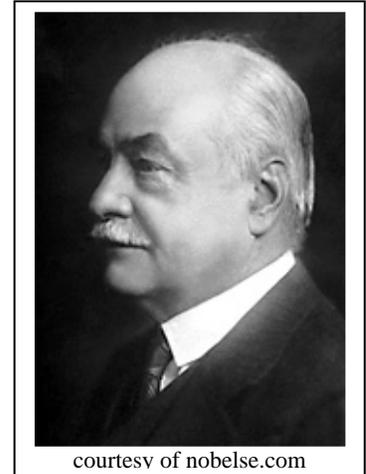
Nicholas Murray Butler

1931

“Optimism is essential to achievement and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress.”

Nicholas Butler was born in New Jersey, the son of a manufacturer. At the age of 20 he graduated from Columbia University and earned his masters degree three years later. He then studied in Paris and Berlin where he became friends with Elihu Root, a Nobel Prize Laureate. They would remain friends for their whole lives. Butler first married in 1887 and had one daughter. His first wife died in 1903 and he married again in 1907.

He joined the staff of Columbia College in the Philosophy department after completing his education. He would remain at Columbia for 60 years.



Within a few years of teaching at Columbia, Butler developed a program for educators known as the Teachers College. He also started the Educational Review Journal, a publication about teaching methods. He was the editor of this Journal for 30 years. He wrote reports on state and local education, was a member of the New Jersey Board of Education, and helped develop the College Entrance Examination Board. He became the president of Columbia University in 1902 and was president until 1945.

During his presidency Columbia made amazing progress. It became a major university.

- 1862-1947
- President of Columbia University
 - Advisor to Presidents Taft and Roosevelt
 - Member Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
 - Kellogg Brand Pact
 - Candidate for President

“Necessity does the work of courage.”

All graduate programs were expanded, and schools were added such as journalism and dentistry. The student body was increased from 4,000 to 34,000 with a similar increase in staff. Donations and finances also increased. Salaries for teaching were increased to attract the best and brightest in their fields.

Butler had success in politics as well as education. He was a delegate to the Republican conventions from 1888 until 1936. He was part of a political alliance with Root, Taft, and Roosevelt in the early days of the century.

In 1912 Roosevelt ran for the presidency as

candidate of the Progressive party, an offshoot of the Republican Party. Taft and Butler ran for president and vice president as Republicans. Because the dual candidacy split the vote among Republicans, Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat won the election.

In 1916 Butler supported Root unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination. He tried to win the nomination for himself in 1920 and 1924 but failed to win it.

Butler attempted to unite the world of education and politics to achieve world peace through international cooperation. He was chairman of the Conferences on International Arbitration which met from 1907 through 1912. He participated in the International Conciliation, a Carnegie organization founded by a Nobel Peace Laureate d'Estournelle de Constant. He was a member of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace for thirty five years. He was influential in persuading Carnegie to create the Endowment in 1910 with a gift of ten million dollars. He served as head of the Endowment's section on international education and communication.

He was a supporter of the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 because he felt it was having negative effects on the country.

In 1931 Butler won the Nobel Peace Prize in the same year as Jane Addams. He was honored for his work with Carnegie as well as the Conferences on International Arbitration.

Butler became almost blind in 1945 after writing his biography, "Across the Bully Years". He died in 1947.

Butler was a Nobel Peace Laureate, an educator, a university president, an advisor to seven presidents, and a friend of foreign leaders. He received awards from fifteen foreign governments, had thirty-seven honorary degrees, and was a member of more than fifty learned societies and twenty clubs. Butler was the author of many books, pamphlets, and speeches, traveled to Europe more than 100 times, was a leader in the Republican Party, and an advocate of peace. He was nicknamed Nicolas "Miraculous" Butler by Theodore Roosevelt because of his many educational and political achievements. This described him perfectly.

Suggested Classroom Activities Grades 9-12

Nicholas Murray Butler

Introduction/Warm Up

Using these quotes from Butler to discuss or write reactions/explanations

"America is the best half-educated country in the world."

“An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less.”

“Many peoples' tombstones should read 'Died at 30, buried at 60.’”

Discussion Questions

1. Butler knew Nobel Laureates as friends and in his professional life. Who were they, when did they win, and why? (Level 1)
2. What did Butler mean by “Many peoples' tombstones should read 'Died at 30, buried at 60.’ (Level 1)
3. Butler’s professional life was centered on education. What influences did he have on education? (Level 2)
4. What caused the Republican Party to lose the election of 1912? (Level 2)
5. What influenced Butler’s win of the Nobel Peace Laureate in 1931? (Level 3)
6. Butler’s three interests were politics, education and peace. How do these influence each other in positive or negative ways? (Level 3)

Vocabulary

1. Alliance
2. Progressive Party
3. Offshoot
4. Arbitration
5. Endowment
6. Repeal

Technology Option:

On the Internet find pictures of Murray, Root, Roosevelt, Wilson, Taft, Carnegie, and Jane Addams. Copy and Paste the pictures into a Word document and write about how they knew each other and how they worked together.

Selected Bibliography

<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/nfhtml/nfgall.html> Portraits of Butler and contemporary men

[http://experts.about.com/e/n/ni/Nicholas M. Butler.htm](http://experts.about.com/e/n/ni/Nicholas_M._Butler.htm) Biographical information on Butler.

<http://www.nobel.no/> Nobel Peace Prize official site