

The University as Intellectual Leader

By Charles M. Perry

EVERYONE is impressed today with the need of vocational training. In an active society like our own there should be no strictly leisure-class education. Everyone is trying to do something; everyone is trying to fit into the social organization around him; and, of necessity, every person must get some remuneration for what he does.

Even the people who take the so-called "cultural" subjects have to find a place to use them. The tendency toward vocational education among students is to be expected and not to be condemned. The intellectual leadership of the University must have a definite relation to practical life, in other words, must have its point of application.

But vocational education must not be interpreted too narrowly. Many think of "vocations" as being mere routine jobs that require nothing but rules of thumb for successful accomplishment. In that sense, vocational education is not much different from training a monkey to pass a cup for pennies or a dog to retrieve a ball at his master's command.

Vocational training is broader than that. In the first place there is a wide range of vocations. A mature society has diversified enjoyments and many ways of attaining them. The vocations needed will center around these numerous values and methods.

There will be a place for many kinds of artists. The Jooss Ballet will dance the futility of ordinary diplomacy and the horror of the consequences of war. Thomas Hart Benton will paint with nervous lines on statehouse walls the life of the people of the state from pioneer days through banditry to commercial and industrial achievements and political corruption. Stephen Benet will write the epic of the Civil War.

THERE will be a need also for various types of thinkers. The philosophy of Dewey and Whitehead will from different angles help satisfy the craving for a unified view of the world. The relativity of Einstein and the quantum theory of Bohr and his followers will break the ancient dogmatism of elementary physics and so-called common-sense. These activities and many others will come in as man passes beyond the earlier stages. The intellectual service of the University will help to create and maintain these more theoretical vocations.

Furthermore, within each vocation there is the need of supplying adequate theory to carry on with success. Sixty

years ago Hertz discovered certain electrical waves in what was supposed to be the ether. Today that highly theoretical result is the basis of wireless and radio. Every radio expert in the local town, every high school boy who is experimenting with simply contrived radio sets is using those waves, and the more he knows about them the better. It long has been known that a certain metal becomes a conductor of electricity under the influence of light. A number of years ago I was in a large laboratory where that principle was being used to construct a machine to sort out automatically the defective balls from among those that were to be used for ball bearings. The man who was constructing the machine and anyone who had to repair it later had great need of the underlying theory.

IN the field of medicine the same thing is true. A beloved dean at the University of Oklahoma died in 1925 of pernicious anaemia. At the time of his death the laboratories of certain universities were working hard to find a remedy for that particular malady. Inside of a year they came out with a preparation made from liver which was effective in counteracting that disease. Now every general practitioner has those specific remedies either at hand or in the corner drug store. To take up a kindred subject, nearly every university has, during the last few years, been discovering vitamins or experimenting with their effects. We hear so much about them that the wags have been cracking jokes at their expense. But when the local physician faces certain diseases he prescribes vitamin B, or some of the five or six other vitamins, and gets results. A young chemist working with a similar purpose in the laboratories of a Canadian university discovered insulin. In almost every community one now finds diabetic patients whose lives and usefulness have been saved and preserved by this remedy. Incidentally, "insulin shock," discovered by accident in Vienna, has already restored scores of dementia praecox patients in our own State to mental health.

Finally it may be said that if ever a chemist wants to realize the alchemists' dream of changing baser metals into gold he will have to resort to the electronic theory of the chemical elements. It can be asserted with truth that every discovery made by a university in so-called "pure science," be it relativity, quantum theory, the Mendelian laws of heredity, or the

theory of symbols, has its practical application in the course of time.

Granted that the university must make its instruction useful, be it in natural science, philosophy, or the arts, what changes are taking place in society that may modify the method used? Since the war the decline in birth rate has been startling. At the same time better conditions of living, preventive medicine, and remedial methods are enabling the population to live longer. The average age will consequently be greater. This means that, in addition to undergraduates, who may be fewer, there will be a lot of older people to whom education should be addressed. This requires adult education with a vengeance.

First, can the adults take it? Second, do they need it?

William James wrote in a moment of depression that most people stop thinking by the time they are twenty-five. That is too smart a statement to be entirely true. Thorndike has shown in his studies of adult education that men and women can go on actively learning without definite limit. It depends on whether they are expected by the society around them to meet new situations with intelligence or are expected to grow fixed and stupid with age, and on whether they have the opportunity and incentive for improvement placed before them.

WE hear of authentic cases of women learning Greek at eighty; Washington Gladden when he had a stroke in his old age which paralyzed his right side began to learn to write with his left hand so as to carry on his work; most of the commanders in chief in the Great War were men over seventy. The capacity of people over college age to learn is beyond doubt. Furthermore, experience of practical life has made many of them keen for the information that they can use.

Do they need education? It cannot be denied that as we get older we tend to live by our old habits and to resent any one's trying to pry us loose from them. Old ways of doing business, old methods of practicing a profession, old patterns of running the community's or the nation's affairs seem to take on a divine right. There is a hardening of the mental arteries that prevents the circulation of new ideas. It is the function of adult education to keep the minds of the population supple and youthful by presenting new occasions, new materials, and new enthusiasms.

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history of the Choctaws. Holding part of his Indian lineage through that family, he gathered considerable material concerning the Folsoms from reference books, old letters and personal stories handed down by tongue, and wove it into shape. It never has been published, although part of the material has been turned over to the Oklahoma Historical society.

Mr. Impson's interest in Oklahoma Indian affairs manifested itself while he still was a student at the University. He was one of a group of youths who visioned the need of a campus organization to perpetuate Indian customs and sponsor tribal culture.

So he helped organize the Indian Club, which still is active, and became its first chief.

Captain Impson is a life member of the University of Oklahoma Association (since 1935), and has been an Executive Board member. At present he is a member of the Pittsburg County Advisory Council of the association.

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Aside from the need of keeping the mind active there is another need which springs more from the present-day environment. With more and more inventions, social conditions and information about things in general change so fast that the knowledge acquired in college gets largely out of date in five or ten years. To prove this one needs only to mention such things as the quick succession of the railroad, automobile, airplane, the telephone, wireless and television, with all their financial entanglements and social consequences. The change of two thousand years is jammed into one generation. Adult education must meet this crisis if our civilization is not to destroy itself. Here the university has a vast function to perform.

But how to accomplish it? The extension work of the universities is much of it devoted to such a purpose. With a growing sense of the peculiar demand that is being placed upon them the officers of such divisions and departments will do more and more in this line as time goes on. The short courses and institutes that are being conducted in our own university are serving this undertaking well. The extension of summer school offerings so that they satisfy not only the students' need of credit but also vocational and spiritual needs of the population at large will help.

Improving the facilities for broadcasting, and developing the radio programs continually with the adult population in mind will further promote the cause. Keeping in touch with the public school teachers in their professional work and

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supplying them specialized service will move in the same direction. An obligation must also be felt to bring in business and labor groups that may never have been on a campus before to acquaint them with new developments in method and in adjustment to society that concern their daily work.

Calling back such professional groups as lawyers, physicians, and engineers, to acquaint them with the new demands which social change has made upon their vocations and to familiarize them with the growing technique and philosophy of their fields is a measure to be considered seriously.

Another device which should not be ignored in this relation is the "alumni university" carried on at the University of Michigan and a few other institutions. Near commencement time lectures of special interest to the alumni are arranged and publicized. The old grads come back not merely to shed reminiscent tears but to find out something new that was not dreamed of in the days of their ancient past. In this undertaking the university continues to function for them as an educational institution.

To serve the people, an institution of higher education should make its teaching intelligible and applicable. If the "ideas" of Plato or the "monads" of Leibnitz are being set forth they should be presented honestly and truly in their own nature but also with inspired insight into their application to present individual and social needs and with shrewd understanding of the psychological capacities and limitations of the persons to whom they are addressed. In a word the university should aim to bring the whole world of science, philosophy, and art in some measure to every member of the population that it professes to serve. A good university, taken in this sense, is a state's safest investment for the future.

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Dinner honors Young

Nearly four hundred persons attended a dinner given by the Ponca City Chamber of Commerce in December in honor of Roland (Waddy) Young, the Sooner football team's All-American end.

Felix Duvall, of Ponca City, was toastmaster, and Dr. John Abernathy, popular Oklahoma after-dinner speaker, gave the principal address. O. U. alumni and former students made up a large proportion of the crowd.

It was announced at the dinner that football fans in Ponca City were sending the father and mother of Waddy Young and the mother of Ralph Stevenson, also a Ponca City boy and an All Big Six guard, to the Orange Bowl game at Miami, Florida.

High school athletes from many towns in northern Oklahoma were present for the dinner. Tom Stidham, Sooner football coach, presented Young to the crowd.

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