

They Know Where They're Going

Anyone who thinks the younger generation—the student generation—falls short of the mark the older generation sets for them should be convinced by the results of the Sooner's first "bull session" that the students are being underrated.

On a Tuesday evening in mid-November, five outstanding students of the University, one faculty member and one alumnus gathered around a table in the Union to form the *Sooner Magazine's* first planned "Bull Session" party.

The session was conceived as a means of getting student opinion on a wide range of subjects with the faculty member and alumnus invited to present the viewpoint of different generations.

Those participating were Betsy Blatt, fine arts senior from Oklahoma City; DeVier Pierson, law junior from Oklahoma City; Donald Wilson, arts and sciences junior from Eufaula; Robert Robertson, business sophomore from Monmouth, Illinois; Rosemary Skinner, arts and sciences sophomore from Oklahoma City; M. L. Wardell, '19ba, David Ross Boyd professor of history, and Roy P. Stewart, '31ba, *Daily Oklahoman* special reporter.

No member of the group knew what questions would be asked. The entire conversations that followed from the informal setting were tape recorded. Portions printed here have been edited and did not necessarily occur in the order of presentation.

QUESTION: Is the present generation any better or any worse than the ones that preceded it?

APATHY OR CONCENTRATION

Betsy: The thing I seem to have noticed about this particular generation, on questions that should interest everyone on outstanding social and political issues, is that they seem to have an apathetic attitude. This is my own observation: very few people are interested in things to the point that they will do something about it.

Wardell: I think your generation does more thinking about more things than the generation that preceded you. I think that is true, because each of these three young men around the table is considering that he's going to give some time to the armed forces. He's going to think about it. That takes two years out of his life so far as being able to go into business is concerned.

So he has to do more planning than Mr. Stewart and I had to do when we were their ages. In so far as political affairs are concerned with radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, and more people going to college all the time, I think they are in a position to know, and I rather suspect do know, more politically than the generation that preceded yours.

Donald: Today, atomic energy, hydrogen and everything coming in, a whole new era has opened up. For instance, take the branch of agriculture that deals with chemicals. You can raise vegetables now in water. You can raise unnumbered quantities of them and they can be fed by synthetics. That makes the supply unlimited. That's something no other generation had. It's within the grasp of our generation to supply the world, almost, with food stuffs through science. And with hydrogen and atomic energy coming in, technological possibilities are almost unlimited.

DeVier: Do you think there was ever a time in any generation when they did not have vast new things to think about? We think in terms of the entire world now because our communication and transportation is adapted to those terms. Back in the Civil War days a trip of a couple of hundred miles to visit relatives was a big experience. Maybe in the next generation a trip to visit those roaming cousins out on Mars will be a big experience, too. I don't think we are ever going to reach the saturation point or anything close to it. I don't think the problems that we have now are more profound than those the last generation had.

Rosemary: It seems to me that when we look at the advancement that has been made on a world-wide scale and nation-wide scale it looks big. Industry and science and things. We've made such great advancement that the problem that I always go back to—that seems so bad—is that so few people do the thinking for so many. That can be seen quite clearly, I think, right here on campus problems. It is always just a few people that sway the crowd.

Stewart: Hasn't that been true all through recorded history?

Rosemary: Yes, that's what I mean.

Stewart: A few do the thinking for the many.

Rosemary: We can make such big advancements otherwise, but when it comes right down to the mind, the human mind, doing simple little things like that. . .

MENTALITY GOING UP

Stewart: Don't you think the general I.Q. has been raised just like we have raised everything else? For instance, output of man. The productivity of man has increased in industry each year over the last 20 by something like 3 or 4% a year. Don't you think the mentality has increased, too, on the whole to go along with that?

Rosemary: Why sure, with better school systems. . .

Stewart: . . . Man has to use his head to work with his hands.

Rosemary: Yes, I definitely believe advancement is being made.

Stewart: We are more intelligent now, are we not, than we were 20 years ago, 40 years ago. I mean in the mass. Of course, you're always going to have this man or this woman who will be just a little bit above the crowd, but in the mass don't you think intelligence has increased?

Rosemary: Yes, I think so.

10 TO 1 IN A SUGAR-COATED JUNGLE

DeVier: Isn't there a sort of compelling influence there as you become more technical in your growth in a country? Where there was one factory, now there are 10 factories and now you have to have 10 minds at the head of each one of them. Before you had nine common laborers working for the one man at the head of it. I don't want to sound political in these philosophies, either, but the more men in your white collar jobs, the more jobs you have available. You naturally have to have a more intelligent man. We're still a world of individuals. People are thinking just as they always have, but people have more

things to think about now in order to bring the bacon home at night.

Stewart: Well, in other words, we would still have to go by the old law and rule of the jungle only we've taken the jungle and modernized it and painted it up.

DeVier: Sort of a sugar-coated jungle, I guess you might call it.

THE CALCULATED HUMANITARIANS

Don: Has man ever progressed any when it wasn't by necessity? Our own government structure is by necessity. Actually no one wanted it but they did it because they had to. Our ideas on world peace and international organization—we don't have them because we want them. We have them because of necessity. And the fact that we can see that we should, might be the saving factor for our generation or of future generations.

DeVier: In other words, it would be kind of embarrassing when we decide whether we're actually humanitarians or not.

Don: Well, it's rather doubtful that we are, when you get right down to it.

Wardell: I don't believe I'd follow you on that. I have a feeling—I'm serious about this—I think that more people are more humanitarian proportionately per thousand now than formerly. I think they have to be through necessity. Now when you say we are not too humanitarian or we're not humanitarians when we give money to foreign countries. . . We gave Britain three and three-quarter billion dollars to get her industry started, in a manner sure, that was to help us, but we knew we couldn't get along without Britain. When we gave France approaching three billion dollars to fight her war in Indo-China, you could say that was to save us, sure, but it was to save

France at the same time. I think that's humanitarianism, don't you?

Don: Well, let me ask you this question, Dr. Wardell, and this is getting on a touchy subject. We went over in East Germany recently and gave them a few million dollars in food, and General Eisenhower came out with a very nice statement that pointed out that we did it for pure humanitarian reasons. And yet there were people starving to death in India and Burma and those countries, and they didn't get the million dollars. Was it humanitarian reasons? That's the question that came to my mind.

Wardell: Well, there are some people who ought to be saved from starvation with high mentalities such as Mr. Stewart spoke about. They're worth more.

Don: To us?

Wardell: Yes, yes they are. They're worth more to us. They really are because they can produce more mentally, politically, and socially. That stands to reason.

Don: Then that's necessity or it's bordering on it rather than strictly humanitarianism.

DeVier: You might say, Dr. Wardell, that we are sort of forced to be "calculated humanitarians."

Wardell: Yes, that's right. We use the term today a lot of times, "a calculated risk." And I think it is alright. I think it is moral to be calculated humanitarians. I think that's right. Don't you?

Betsy: No comment.

Wardell: Well, I think we can come to this conclusion, at this point. If these young people here are representatives, Mr. Stewart, of the present generation, they're thinking farther in their future than you and I thought in our future when we were their age. As you were saying a minute ago, that is a mark of intelligence, greater intel-

ligence than was shown 20 or 40 years ago.

Stewart: I think that they're not only more intelligent, I think their morals are just as good if not better. They do some things different from things we did, but I think we had the same spirit back of it. I think they're going to do alright.

Wardell: Oh, I'm willing to count on them.

QUESTION: Fifty years ago the Horatio Alger story was a familiar one. It became an still is an American ideal. From a purely economic standpoint, is the idea of rags to riches outdated?

FROM I TO 10 ON A SHOESTRING

Stewart: Not at all. You can find one tomorrow. I could sit here and tell them to you all night. I've gone around writing stories about them when maybe I should have been out shining shoes and being an Alger myself. I don't think it has stopped at all. There'll be another one tomorrow. There'll be another one next week.

Rosemary: It seems to me there would be a greater opportunity for them than ever before. Because the potential is greater today and advancements seem almost unlimited in most fields for anyone with enough initiative to get out and do it. And there is more initiative today than before.

DeVier: I guess if we thought any other way than that we'd have to get pretty narrow in our thoughts to the old cry that now that our income taxes are so high and that the government takes so much of our money that there is no incentive for a person to get out in a private business. I don't believe that at all. I'll go along with what's been said. I think that this could be tacked on to the first problem that we were discussing. Where there was once one factory

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PARTICIPANTS IN THE SOONER'S first planned bull session were Dr. M. L. Wardell, Betsy Blatt, DeVier Pierson, Don Wilson, Robert Robertson, Roy P. Stewart, and Rosemary Skinner. Stewart, columnist for the *Daily Oklahoman*, used a great part of this discussion in his column.

They Know . . .

to have a Horatio Alger in, now you have ten factories in the same location. Where there was one idea for someone to start out on a shoestring, now you have many, many more.

QUESTION: What is the primary purpose of colleges and universities?

STRESS ON THE THINKING PART

Wardell: What I'd like to ask is a question here that Chancellor Hutchins, formerly Chancellor of Chicago University, fussed about so long while he was chancellor. And he was fussing because all of the time he thought that most of the colleges and universities were preparing young men and women to go out and earn a living. His theory was that that isn't what colleges and universities are for. Now what I wonder is what each of you here in the University, representing all university students, what do you think about that? Do you think Chancellor Hutchins was wrong when he said that our school should not teach, primarily, as he thought they were, how to earn a living.

Don: What do you mean by primarily, Dr. Wardell?

Wardell: Just that. To teach them how

to make more money to live more comfortably.

Don: I think he's right. I don't think that is the principle upon which it is founded at all.

Wardell: It is not the principle on which it is founded. I'll agree with you on that, but the colleges as they are today. . .

Don: I think he is wrong there, also.

Betsy: I don't. Some of the people who come out of these schools have been here four years and they seem not to have learned anything except how to make a living.

Wardell: That's just what Chancellor Hutchins was saying—about what he complained.

DeVier: Some of them don't learn how to do that.

Betsy: That's right. Some of them just barely know how to do that. And I can't understand what they do down here four years.

Stewart: Do you think that they have had an opportunity to learn how to make a living and also how to live and how to be a citizen of a community?

Betsy: I think it's partly a fault of the educational system. I don't know. It doesn't seem to me like enough stress is put on the thinking part of the business.

DeVier: It's bad, because too many peo-

ple come here with the idea, I'm going to learn how to make the god almighty dollar and get out. There are too many people with that idea and yet on the other hand, I am a product of the arts and sciences college before I went into Law School. Certainly that wasn't "this is the way you make your dollar next Monday," and "this is the way you make it the month after that." The courses I took I don't believe were helping me to make a dollar, particularly, or earn a living. Maybe they were (I hope this doesn't sound too idealistic) teaching me how to learn to live a life or to be a better person.

Don: To enjoy life, perhaps.

DeVier: Certainly. You don't enjoy life if you are always wondering about where your next slice of bread is coming from. There's a place for everything, but I think we're a long way from being a trade school. And that most universities are. I don't believe that colleges and universities are here just to help you earn a living.

PRIDE IN THE PLAYING PART

DeVier: Let's not forget the fact that college life isn't all classrooms. Bringing that out for better or for worse, there is certainly an environment down here that isn't all scholastic.

Don: We're rather proud of it.

DeVier: Well, we rather enjoy it.

Your Biography Is Needed . . . Continued from Preceding Page

Present occupation or position held:

Occupations or positions held before present one:

Membership or position in civic, fraternal, religious, military or other organizations since graduation:

Honors or distinctions of any kind received since graduation:

Hobbies or recreational interests:

Names of children and ages:

Name and address of a person who will always know your address:

Date: _____

Signed _____

Address _____

Mail to:

University of Oklahoma Alumni Association

Norman, Oklahoma