

What Are Aims of Education

For a faculty answer to the question, seven professors were interviewed by the magazine's assistant editor. They know what the answer is but hold no view of reaching it tomorrow.

Compiled By ROBERT TALLEY, '55

"You mean," asked the teacher dejectedly, "what should we professors be able to do for our students? I can tell you—the impossible!

"Or," he added, "what is impossible now." This statement mirrors some of the feelings of seven professors who were asked to give their ideas on what this and other universities should contribute to those who come to them for knowledge. The group agreed on the failings of our colleges and they saw the tremendous job that would have to be accomplished before these hopes could become satisfying fact.

They differed on the means of hauling their schools up the mountain, but they all know where the mountain is and the crevices and cliffs that would have to be met in climbing it. And they know what is at the top.

There, figuratively resting upon a satin pillow, gleam the ultimate prizes for any university. One, the ability to take young minds and prepare them to carry on a life's work profitable to themselves and to their society. And, two—much less easy to grasp—the facility to develop capacities and inner resources, to build whole individuals.

Dr. Maurice H. Merrill, '19ba, '22Law, research professor of law, described these whole persons as those who could "be good company for themselves when they are alone." And Dean William E. Livezey of the College of Arts and Sciences, described the ability to be one that would "help the student discover himself—the old

Socratic 'Know Thyself.'" On the other hand, J. Bruce Wiley, '35eng, '41m.eng, associate professor of electrical engineering, said the finished individual was one with "an active awareness of social responsibilities who could spend 24 hours in a bare room and need nothing to keep him busy."

These men mentioned other ends to college, the need for brains to add to what man can know, to explore new channels of thought, and to be broad enough to see all sides of life, even though they, in their own work, must specialize along minute lines.

Dr. William Schriever, professor of chemistry, summed up what the University of Oklahoma and others should get done during the four to seven years they have charge of young minds. He listed the purposes as being "to assist students in learning to understand the amazingly complex world in which they live,—its astounding physical structure as well as its complicated social structure—, in acquiring fundamental knowledge which will enable them to render useful services to society; in learning to live and to enjoy life in this modern world; in acquiring great ideals of conduct, in stimulating them to act in accordance with those ideals, and to help them perceive and accept their responsibilities as active participants in society."

Consideration of the problem of training both for The Good Life and The Good Job is relatively new to educators. It lay dormant, like a Johnson grass seed on the world's lawn for centuries, but now it has

burst out so that it must be chopped down or it will take over. In the middle ages, a scholar could learn all that was taught in the universities.

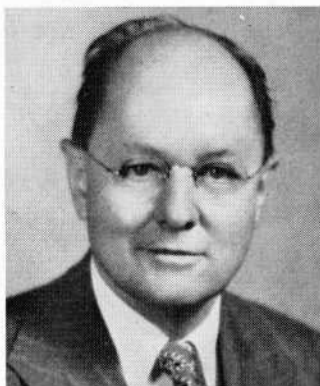
Even up to 100 years ago, when our grandfathers were polishing up their grievances for the Civil War, college courses consisted mostly of Latin, Greek, mathematics and science. But no longer.

During the years that our grandfathers were shooting at each other, and later, during the days of Jesse James and the Dalton Boys, and on past Teddy Roosevelt, the Ford, and the first World War, knowledge exploded in a thousand directions.

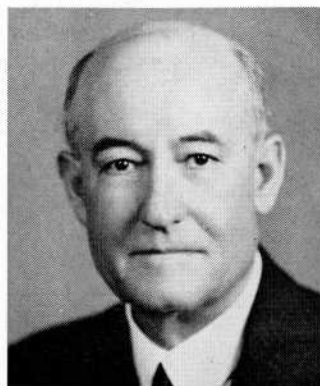
"For example," said Dr. John F. Bender, David Ross Boyd professor emeritus of school administration, "50 years ago economics was a minor department or subject usually in the field of history. Subject matter in this field has now multiplied and is continuing to multiply so that practically every large university has a college of business administration offering four years work in that field alone."

And other new fields have sprouted and are producing offspring—psychology, sociology, anthropology, geology—until now, some few years later, we are mixed up, not with the intricacies of steam the engine, but with nuclear physics, geopolitics, sonic barriers, fiberglass, propaganda. Where 100 years ago sages were sniffing around for new paths, students today are smothered with possibilities for exploration.

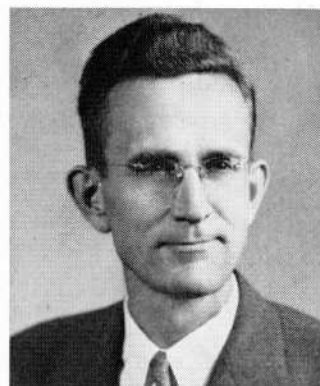
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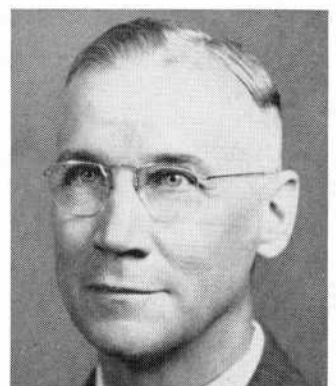
MAURICE H. MERRILL



JOHN F. BENDER



WILLIAM E. LIVEZEY



WILLIAM SCHRIEVER

... Twenty-Four Hours in a Bare Room and Nothing to Do

Aims of Education--Faculty Views

Continued from page 8

Where 100 years ago, one could absorb most of what the world knew, today the individual must point himself down one narrow road to become proficient. And he must stick to that road for success. It is impossible to teach anyone in the short span of college more than a small percentage of what there is to know, much less everything. And this is the great problem.

If he can't know everything, what is he to learn? What segments out of the multitude of fields can he be expected to swallow and assimilate? And what about the parts left out? How much will they hurt him?

Is he to be an individual who is sufficiently broad to be wise in a world of men, or is he to stick to his little technical track and pursue it, leaving out the mental gold that would make him and his work complete?

Let's look at the possibilities offered by these seven professors.

If an individual is to be in a sense whole, he should have a wide knowledge of philosophy, sociology, history, literature, sciences and other subjects not directly connected to his pay check. If he is an engineer, he should know something of psychology, because men will use his works; if he is a physicist nowadays, he should know something of politics, and if he is a lawyer, of course he should know government, sociology, criminology, history, philosophy and other fields that can let him more wisely handle the lives and fortunes he directs.

Danger then lies in specializing to the point that, as Dr. Livezey said, "we have narrow minded experts or single-track technicians as the governing forces of society."

Colleges must, said John Eriksen, assistant dean of University College and a government teacher, take students along a

straight specialized line for their professions, but branch them out at a 90-degree angle to give them some knowledge of how their pieces of work fit into the worldwide puzzle. "Each specialist," he said, "cannot relate accurately his *specific* knowledge without a more *general* knowledge of other fields of education . . . It is not an either/or situation—he must have both. The world demands a broadly learned individual—and even though he can't learn everything, he can have an appreciation of much of it so as not to go awry."

"This is an age of specialization," stated Dr. Jim E. Reese, professor of economics. "The tendency is toward more and more specialization. And the more specialization we have, the less perspective one has toward the overall picture. The danger is in not knowing the human side of work and its relation to other areas.

"I am not sure that the gains of specialization are not offset by its lacks," he concluded. So it appears then that if the "whole man" is left out in favor of helping the student to become a top-flight number juggler or other expert, his growth and contribution to society will be stunted because he does not have the background for what we call good citizenship, or social awareness.

Tangible effects of what Dr. Reese called "the materialistic philosophies of the 19th and 20th centuries"—outgrowths of the problem—are now revealing themselves in our international relations. The world recognizes our technical know-how, but questions our ability to deal wisely as one clan of human beings with other clans.

Of this, Dr. Bender said, "We'll have naturally a very serious difficulty in securing the good will of many nations, who probably respect our great economic and mate-

rial power, but who are yet somewhat doubtful of our capacity to exercise world leadership."

On the other hand, if universities left out any consideration of directly productive professional training, which none of them is likely to do, then our economy, standard of living and position in world affairs might suffer considerably.

And, we would be a nation of men and women who could appreciate life, but without the material equipment we are used to for carrying out that appreciation. We would be people who could enjoy swimming in the ocean, but would have to have automobiles to get there.

In addition, since our society recognizes specialization both financially and socially, it probably will continue. High salaries are paid to workers who know a particular job well—not to those who know how to appreciate art or music or gravity or sunsets in their free time. The rewards of learning to live and of enjoying it must come from inner satisfactions and from friends' pats on the back, but probably not from big pay checks.

So the danger then boils down to the threat that we will breed a race of automatons, skilled in one tiny area, but deficient even in such everyday matters as ethics, politics, world affairs and why trees grow.

How are the universities to get around this over-specialization?

Mr. Wiley suggested that instead of teaching a limited amount well, schools should teach an increased amount to a lesser degree. He mentioned also the matter of improving teaching methods and gave this example.

Years ago, he said, it was terrifically difficult to train a telephone man in the intricate art of switching telephone connections. But with the application of the "calculus of logic," which puts thoughts into algebraic formula, the art became a science and now employees become proficient in several weeks instead of years.

Wiley also discussed the need for teachers who are technically skillful but broad enough in their backgrounds to instill some of their wide scope into their pupils. But, he said, salaries for teachers are based to a great extent upon degrees, the result of specialization, and it is not profitable for a teacher to become that widely learned.

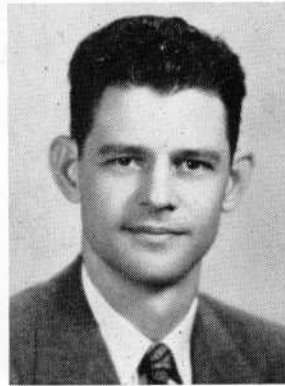
"The teacher," Wiley said, "sees university administrations recognizing those who have specialized. The administration must have a yardstick, and the easiest to use without thinking is scholastic achievement by degrees. So, while universities recognize overspecialization, they go right on promoting it."



J. BRUCE WILEY



JOHN ERIKSEN



JIM E. REESE

... More Specialization—Less Perspective

Continued page 32

shifting more and more to manufacturing. Population has found its norm and has been continually rising since 1945 as industrialization progresses. Population shifts from rural to urban areas have been advantageous to those concerned as shown by the fact that mechanization of agriculture has increased as has per capita farm income, and the fact that incomes of urban workers have been steadily increasing. In addition, there are 757 more manufacturers in Oklahoma than there were in 1947, and 72.4 per cent more industrial production. The trend has started; but there is much yet to be done. It can only be done from within.

Therefore, to the question: "What's

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wrong with Oklahoma?", comes the quick answer: "Nothing which an aggressive, proud, active people cannot remedy." Certainly, in Oklahoma there is a past we can look back on with pride, and with dedicated work there is a future we can look forward to with trusting hope.

Aims of Education—Faculty Views

Continued from page 10

Dean Livezey suggested that "the faculty and students can collectively share the burden. It is essential that the material be presented ably and inspiringly by the instructor, but the ultimate success will depend upon the receptivity of the student.

"And, four years in college," he said, "is only the training ground to prepare an individual so that outside he can still continue to grow. You've got to have intelligent, dedicated teachers, reasonably competent and definitely interested students before you can achieve any form of the goal.

"The University fails," Dean Livezey continued, "when the student sees in it nothing more than a country club or a professional athletic club as a means to achieve financial independence or personal self-gratification."

Dr. Reese offered the idea that college could be extended with students first handling general background subjects and then specializing, "but," he said, "that means a five or six-year program."

He mentioned as well that colleges might follow the British plan of giving broad educations in college with students specializing after college, by serving apprenticeships. "It may be," he commented, "that students do not need as much specialization in college as they get."

Dr. Bender proposed that because of the enormous increase in subject matter, "a reorganization will be needed so that students will have some understanding at least of the origin of the knowledge in these many fields. "This," he pointed out, "has already been undertaken at Columbia and Chicago and to some extent at other universities."

So there are many possible solutions to the problem confronting our universities, and there is not always agreement on what should be done. But there is agreement that this current trend will have to be stopped. Some educators are optimistic that an evolution—or revolution—whichever it may be, will come soon. Others are not, to varying degrees.

Dr. Merrill commented, "We are in the position of the boy with the bantam hens who decided their eggs were too small. The boy got an ostrich egg and hung it up in the chickenhouse, telling his hens, 'Keep your eye on this and do your best'."

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