

The Other Side of the Coin

have we neglected the intellect in our zeal for technical competence?

By JOHN S. EZELL

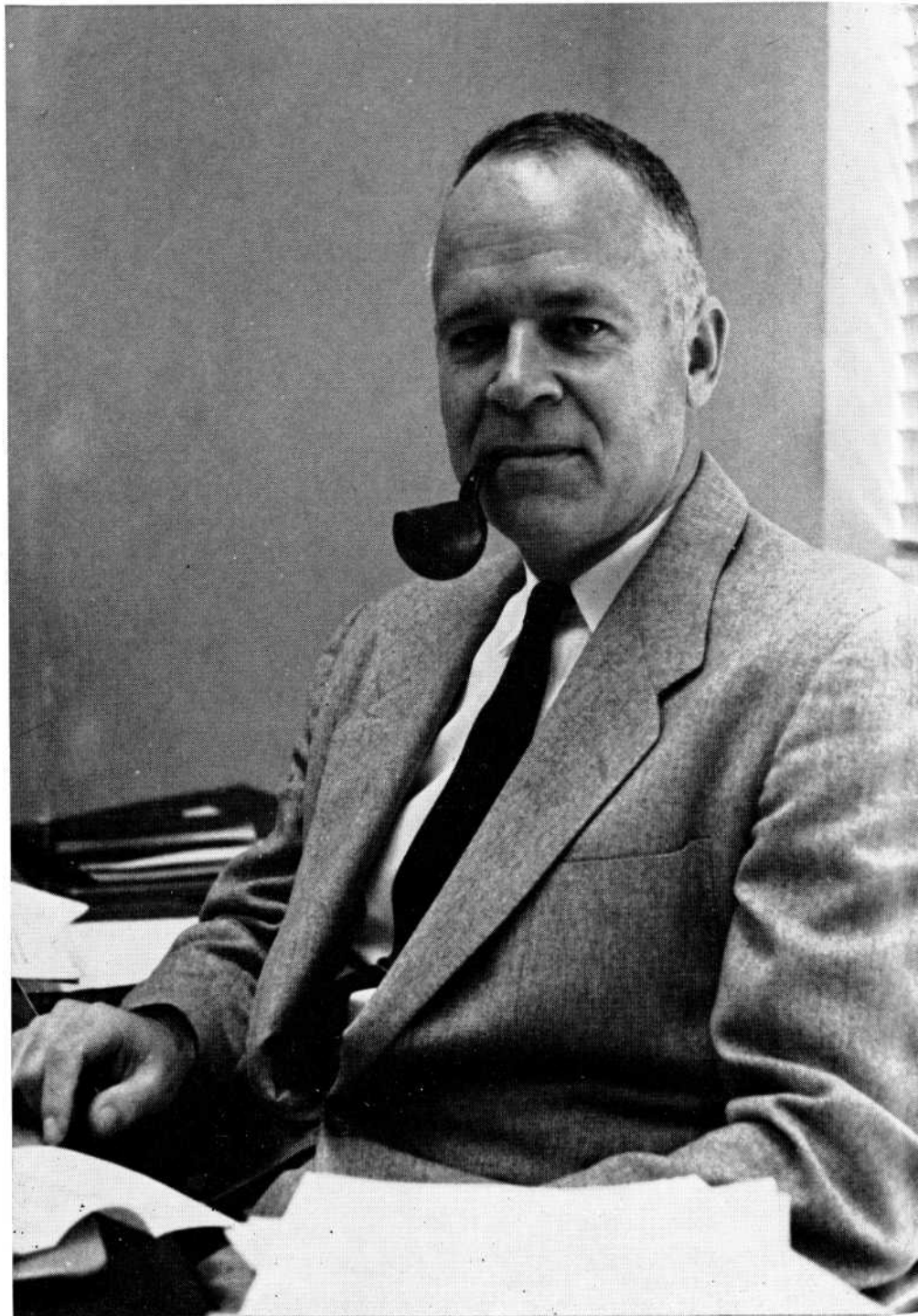
OUR SURVIVAL as a nation depends primarily on a single resource—educated people. Only through them can our most cherished heritages—freedom, understanding, and recognition and appreciation of truth—be advanced and defended. That Americans, almost without exception, will agree is evidenced by the increasing hoards besieging the nation's colleges and universities and by the mounting percentages of family and governmental budgets assigned to education.

Yet in the zeal to educate, Americans often have a distorted view of the desired goal to be attained. Montesquieu, over two centuries ago, warned that "in a republican form of government . . . the *whole* power of education is required." This fact notwithstanding, have we demanded and used the "whole power" of education?

We take pride in the fact that by all of the standards that history has created to measure a nation's success, America is pre-eminent. For the first time in human record we have created a society in which poverty is a lingering relic rather than the normal condition of mankind. The world is awed by our military might and industrial potential, and we boast stable political institutions which, despite acknowledged imperfections, have proven capable of change, while at the same time maintaining liberty and law.

But have we achieved the good life to which our government is dedicated? The very success of our society has tended to blind us to its shortcomings and the additional opportunities that wealth and power provide. How many are willing to pause and pose the question as to whether wealth

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and power in themselves constitute a good life for either the citizen or the nation? Older civilizations accuse Americans of being individually and collectively "power mad" and "power hungry." Certainly for the past generation we have been preoccupied with power. This nation's major energies have been marshaled in support of a massive and enormously costly struggle against an alien ideology—Communism—that threatens the democratic way of life. Few would question the necessity and justification for such sacrifice. But have we become so absorbed in the struggle itself as to largely forget the basic issue at stake: the character and quality of two competing kinds of society?

Likewise, prosperity appears to have so lulled into forgetfulness the social conscience that brought us the benefits we now enjoy that we hardly notice that all is not well in our private paradise. Men seldom question their lives and values while riding the crest of good fortune; problems are to be faced only when they threaten to engulf us. Spinoza once commented that "No one can have lived in the world without observing that most people, when in prosperity, are so over-brimming with wisdom . . . that they take every offer of advice as a personal insult, whereas in adversity they know not where to turn, but beg and pray for counsel from every passer-by."

The question is whether the American people, in the absence of pressing adversity, are willing to face the realities of life. Is conspicuous consumption really all we want of life; does our present use of wealth truly satisfy us; is there not something else that we should be doing to fulfill the promise of America? Do we have the courage to examine the bases of our power and prosperity, to question the priorities of public policy, and, in short, to reassess objectively whether or not the paths we are now following will bring security from power and happiness from material possessions?

For example, the race in space in which our country is now involved has aroused the imagination and interest of Americans to an unprecedented degree. Virtually without hesitation or debate we have embraced a fantastically costly space program, a major part of which is a \$20,000,000,000 project of putting a man on the moon before 1970, and, more important, before the Russians. Since a moon site has no foreseeable value as a base for military operations, prestige alone seems to be the determining

factor. We will show the world that our technology is superior. Thus other matters must wait as we draft the larger part of our wealth and brains for this effort. The commitment of the government becomes clear when, by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and subsequent measures, priority for federal assistance to education was given to science and engineering.

Regardless of its outcome, the race to the moon will not decide the course of history. The success or failure of the United States in shaping the character of its people, in training them to meet democratic responsibilities and in developing itself into a force for progress and civilization, will, in the long run, determine the value judgment that history will make of this nation. The preservation of our free society in the last analysis will depend upon whether we harness the tremendous power of human knowledge to enrich our own lives and create a rational and civilized world order. As desperately as the world needs knowledge, if it produces only technological advance and not men and women of good will and moral sensitivity who care and who will stand for the right, the world will be little better for it.

Other voices must be heeded than those of the technicians and the spokesmen for wealth. It is possible that the emphasis on scientific research that has given the impression of overpowering strength, of the ability to annihilate other disciplines and to absorb the remainder, which faint-hearted humanists have been inclined to attribute to the natural sciences since World War II, has already begun to lose some of its power to terrify or to dismay. Even among scientists there seems to be a growing willingness to recognize the importance of other fields, to acknowledge other than purely scientific values, and to be genuinely interested in a variety of methods of approach. In a period as troubled and perplexed as ours and as worried about national goals and the role moral values must play in their attainment, interest in the humanities cannot fail to revive.

What kind of education can be expected to meet such formidable challenges? The answer lies in the creation of a system that above all else concentrates upon the creation of free minds and spirits, that has as its goal not the teaching of *what* to think but *how* to think. Our problem is not that of catching up with or surpassing the Russians in the production of engineers or sci-

entists. For too long we have neglected the training of the intellect in our zeal to produce the technically competent and "well-adjusted" person. Higher education has thus become the pathway to "success" through mastery of technical and practical fields of knowledge, with little concern for creativity or elevating the mind and spirit. The American crisis is one that would confront us if the last Communist suddenly vanished from the earth. It involves nothing less than our national character as a free society and its ability to bring meaning and fulfillment to the lives of its people.

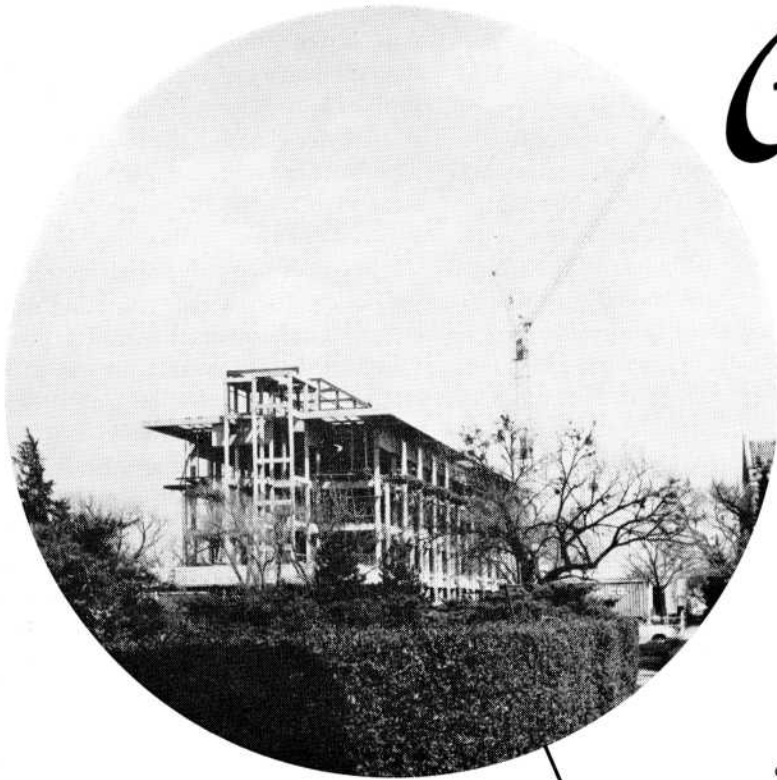
Beyond that, to make a permanent impression on the world, the United States must make positive contributions in meeting the problems of this age. Leaders of a special type must be produced; those whose primary concern is with personal material benefit for services rendered will not suffice. One vital intangible attribute must be truthfulness. In the words of Montaigne, "to hunt after truth is properly our business, and we are inexcusable if we carry on the chase impertinently and ill. . . ."

The "whole power" of education cannot be achieved until every campus and every "educated" person becomes a dedicated citadel of truth. Nor can it be restricted only to the philosophical or dramatic episodes of life; it must permeate the mundane as well. As Pasternak has reminded us, "What for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music: The irresistible power of the unarmed truth." Obviously, in order to meet their higher responsibilities, all educational institutions must be free to pursue the truth in all things. This essential attribute of a university is of much greater importance than any material benefits that it may receive.

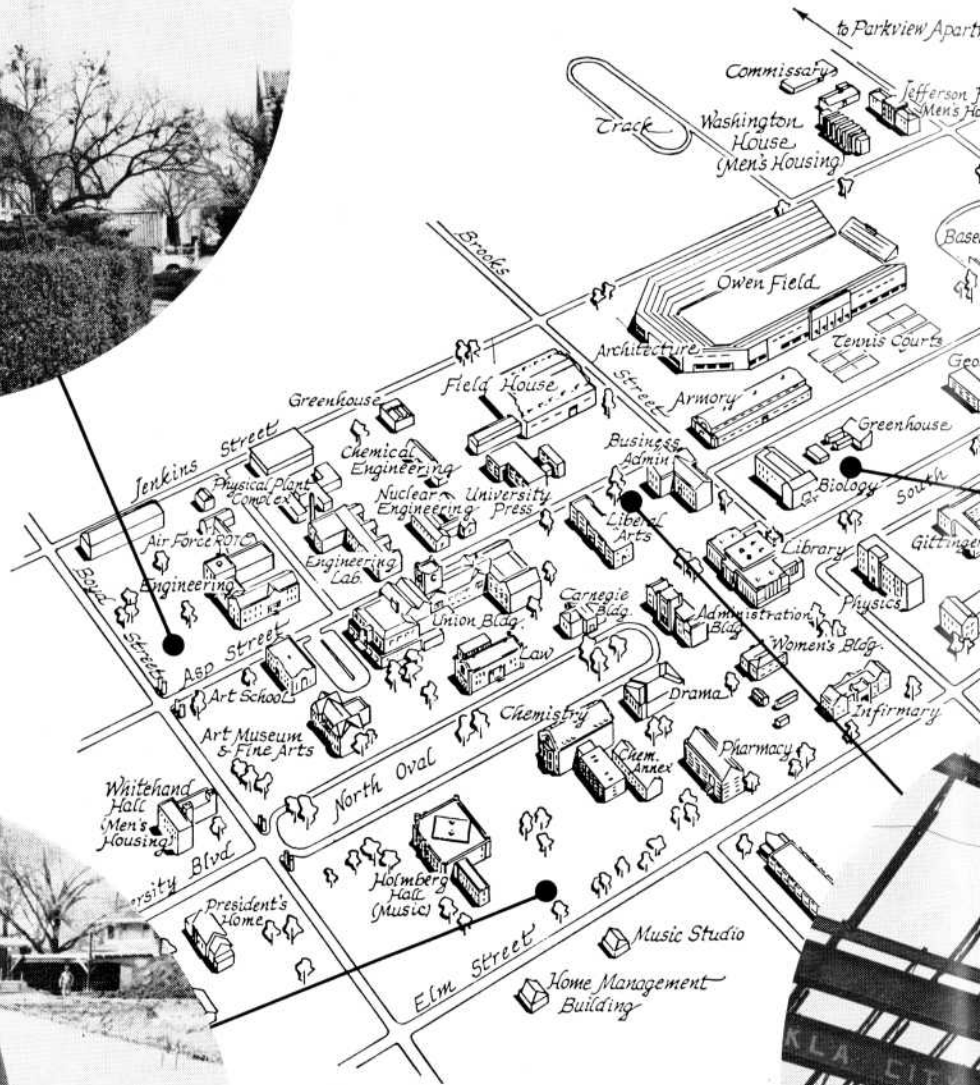
We have reached a point in history where we must decide whether wealth and power are to be goals or merely the instruments by which our lives and civilization can be enriched. Excellence and greatness will come to America only when her people use the full power of education to give purpose and direction to their individual and collective lives. With the wealth and leisure already attained, we must now devote a part of our energies to the cultivation of beauty, to literature and philosophy, to liberal and fine arts. It is entirely possible that "The secret of freedom is courage. And the secret of courage may turn out, after all, to be happiness."

Campus Co

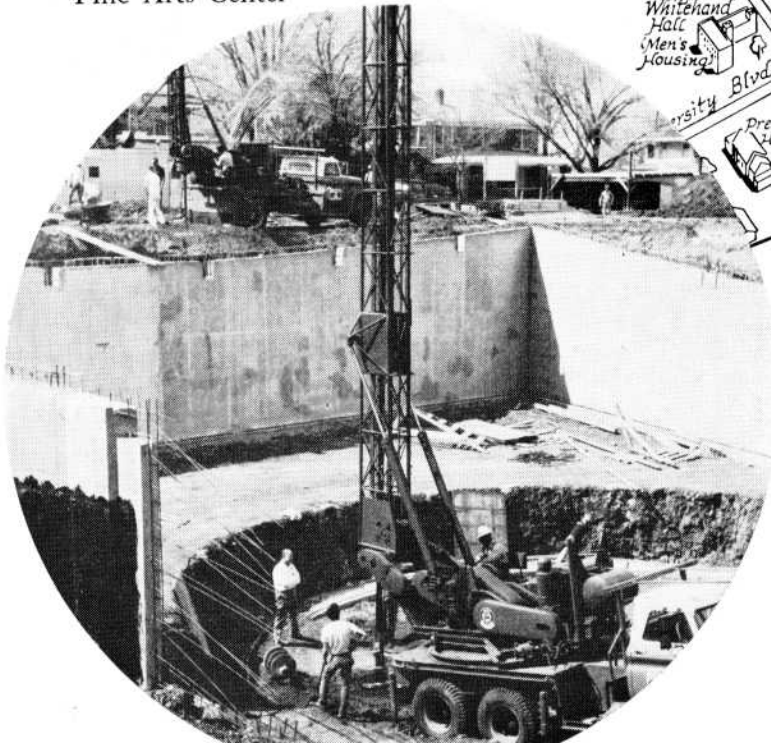
Main Campus
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA



The Engineering Center



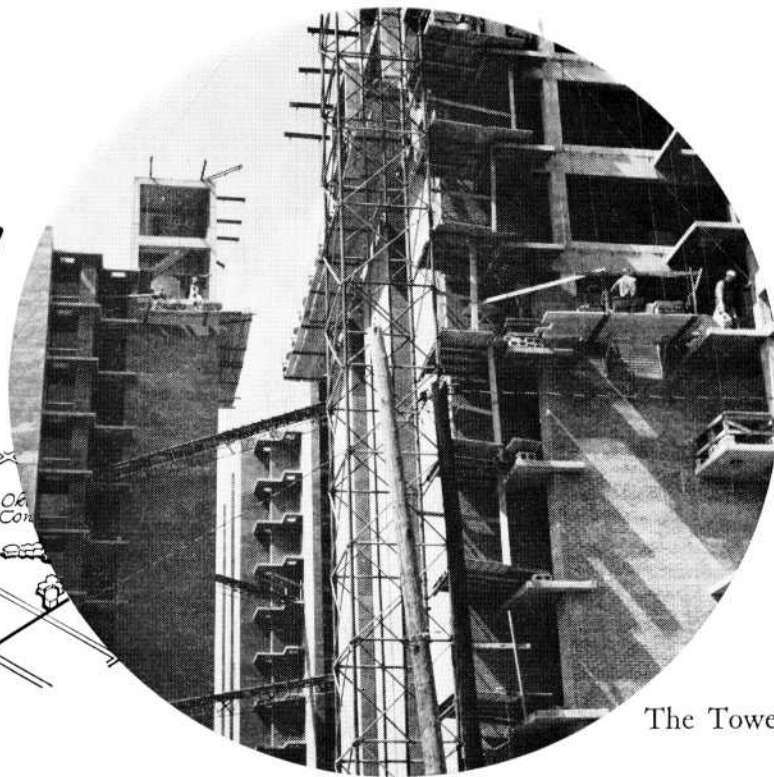
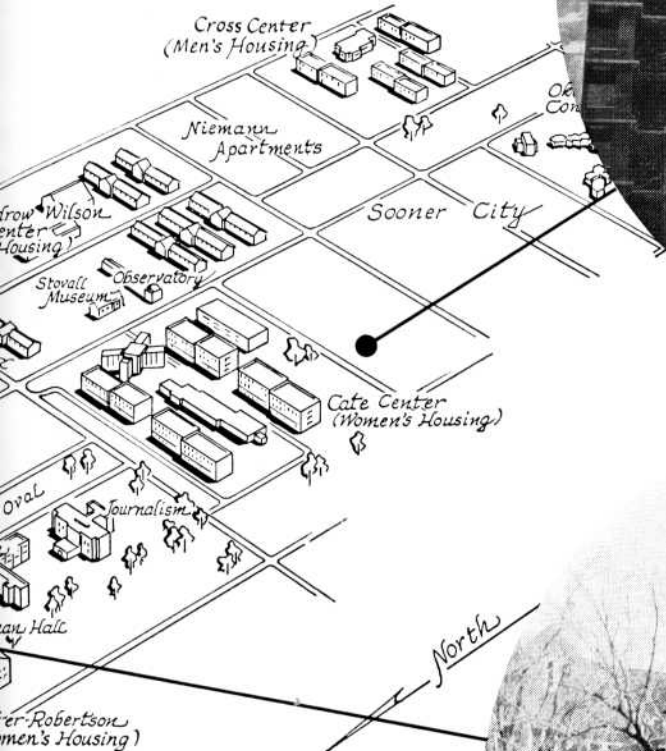
Fine Arts Center



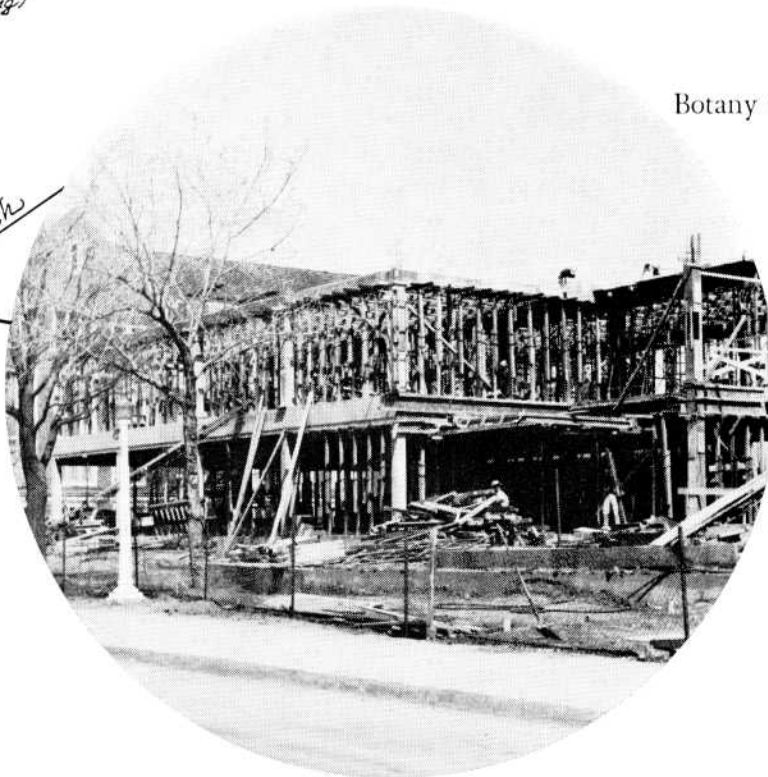
Adams Hall Addition



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The Towers



Botany and Microbiology



The University is in the midst of an unparalleled building boom. Alumni who return to their alma mater for football next fall will find new buildings in almost every corner of the campus. A \$300,000 addition to Adams Hall, the business building, is taking shape. The engineers are happily anticipating the completion of a new Engineering Center (\$2.8 million) next to Felgar Hall and the Aerospace Center (\$440,000) on the North Campus. The Botany and Microbiology Building (\$1.8 million) is springing up on the South Oval. The spectacular, 12-story Towers dormitory has risen between Cross and Cate Centers. A dramatic Fine Arts Center (\$1.5 million) is under construction behind Holmberg Hall. The OCCE has a new administration building (\$400,000). Married couple apartments (\$1.2 million) have been completed. The boom is a boon to the species *sidewalkis superintendensis*, who are happily supervising the many projects.