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EDUCATION

The government offices in Washington had just closed for the day. Thousands of employees were pouring from the buildings and along the sidewalks. Lines of street cars were rapidly swallowing the crush of homeward bound workers. Automobiles were struggling from parking places and forming themselves into a roaring, clashing, blaring river of steel that on the one-way streets reached from curb to curb and flowed along slowly, irregularly and irresistably. My car, caught in the outer line of the noisy stream, moved jerkily with the current across the intersection of two one-way streets when a messenger boy on a bicycle crashed into the running board and disappeared under the car. Horrified, I jammed on the brakes and leaned from the window. At the interruption other brakes squealed, horns sounded and engines raced in a new crescendo of sound. There lay the bicycle half under the rear wheel, and the boy flat on his back, staring into my eyes. I called, "Are you hurt?" He glared at me, jumped to his feet, and indignantly exploded "No!" "Is your bicycle damaged?" He picked it up, gave it a jiggle, and again angrily exploded "No!" Then he stepped up to the window, shook his finger in my face and demanded, "Didn't you hear me ring my bell?" But when I soberly shook my finger back at him and asked in turn, "Young man, don't you know you were going in the wrong direction on a one-way street?", his anger and his confidence were completely punctured

and he slipped away in the crowd.

This story might be used as a parable to illustrate what is likely to happen to many of the young men and women who are receiving their degrees today when they discover that a slow moving, powerful world is indifferent to their bell jinglings, and perhaps insistent that they are moving in the wrong direction on some of the world's one-way streets. But I have no wish to make such a discouraging use of the story. I wish rather that it serve as an introduction to a discussion of some of the shrill scoldings that currently attempt to distort public understanding of education, and as an introduction to consideration of certain wrong headed and unrealistic views of the functions of education.

This is an appropriate audience and an appropriate time and place for such a discussion. This audience is made up of those who have first hand experience in a great university; of those who by the relationships of blood ties and friendship have special opportunity and occasion for obtaining personal knowledge of what goes on here; and above all, this audience is splendidly representative of the citizenry of Ohio which has created and supported this University in full confidence that its trust will not be betrayed. Yet the public press and current magazines, read widely by this audience, are constantly presenting viewpoints of education and of educational folk that tend to weaken and sacrifice this confidence to the dishonest exigencies of political argument and advantage.

I refer specifically, of course, to current references to "brain trusters", to the professor in politics, to the ineptitude of the academic man in a hurly-burly world, to all the abusive arguments, both truthful and false, directed against individual professors who have forced or found themselves in the public eye - arguments designed to distract attention from the facts and merits of the problems involved by establishing the presumption that all academic thought and all academic people are impractical, theoretical, and sappy headed. During the five years just passed all of us have been subjected by newspapers and other reading to persistent phrases and statements which, for political purposes, are intended to establish in our minds the conviction that the terms college, university and professor are synonymous with utopianism and brazen irresponsibility.

Even tho' you individually and personally may not have been carried away or deceived by this campaign; even tho' you may have had the penetration to see that the particulars cited did not justify the generalization intended; even tho' your sound judgment has not been swayed by political prejudice, there are tendencies and viewpoints in education that have been given wide circulation which must have aroused doubts and questions in your minds.

One viewpoint and emphasis in education that tends especially to produce the same impression of remoteness and impracticability that political slurring of universities and professors produces is a conception of scholarship that has

wide acceptance in the universities themselves. This conception of scholarship rejects all concern with human values except the values of the abstract intellectual processes. It maintains that it is not the concern of scholarship to attempt to solve the practical problems that mankind encounters. In its most extreme form it asserts that as soon as an investigation or educational venture takes on implications of usefulness it ceases to be worthy of the attention of the true scholar. Usefulness to the individual or society as an objective of scholarship tends in this view to distort the pure beauty of the intellectual structure. Indeed, such men as Abram Flexner and President Hutchins would appear to maintain that the mere presence in the same institution of men or departments that seek to serve the practical purposes and needs of mankind, and of men devoted to "pure" truth is incompatible; that the presence of the former on the same campus with the latter tends to taint and spoil scholarship as onions in the refrigerator taint and spoil the sweet fragrance of butter!

This conception of scholarship and emphasis upon the coldly intellectual, aggrandizes the impersonal and detached character of learning. In its less able disciples it tends to barren erudition, to skill in the recall of details over a wide range of information, to be accumulative rather than creative, to organization that is artificially encyclopaedic or internally logical rather than logical with respect to human use.

Perhaps no viewpoint or activity in education, as it is embodied especially in our colleges and universities, tends more clearly to give students and the general public a sense of remoteness and unreality, mixed with reluctant respect, than does devotion to pure, cold, impersonal scholarship that repudiates all concern and responsibility for its effects upon man and society.

To men who hold and attempt to practice this conception of scholarship various abusive characterizations have been applied. The poet speaks of the scientist who "would pry and botanize upon his mother's grave". A professor of my acquaintance has referred to such scholars as "self-indulgent and irresponsible thumb twiddlers." More kindly contempt is expressed by classing them as "hewers of erudite wood and drawers of the pure waters of curious information." Yet the few men and women in the world, and the number is small, who have the ability and the spirit which lead them to consecrate themselves and their lives to pure thought and investigation, quite without regard to material and social effects, are persons whose work is most disturbing and dangerous to the areas of life in which rules and conventions of behavior and belief have, for most of us, made thought distasteful and an infrequent practice. They are the pioneers upon the frontiers of thought and life, our best critics of complacency. The indifference of cold intellectualism is frequently the only tool that can make the initial crack in the complacent shell of the world's ignorance.

To intellectual development defined in these somewhat narrow terms, education, and especially higher education, has devoted and must continue to devote a considerable portion of its effort. Only in formal educational institutions may we hope to provide abstract scholarship with the opportunities and the protections which will enable it to explore the outer boundaries of thought and knowledge. It is beside the point that these explorations arise from mere love of knowledge for its own sake. It is beside the point that such scholars seek neither gold nor iron, fertile territory nor material discovery which mankind may adapt to its service. Although such scholars define their incentives and motives in terms that glorify indifference to the plight of their fellow humans, their efforts will doubtless continue, as they have in the past, to broaden and enrich the lives of man, whether they will or no. The danger to education and the civilization which it maintains and promotes, does not lie in the pursuit of knowledge that is easily and carelessly described as useless; nor does the danger lie in the antics of the occasional intellectualist who breaks loose upon a startled world with a new evangel of utopianism. The danger lies in the threat that society, failing to understand the truth, will assume that education is, in fact, little concerned with life and human values, and that education may in consequence be neglected and starved as an enterprise that is socially of little importance.

Yet no educational institution upon any level is really devoted to uselessness and inhumanity. There is no student or professor whose experience and function in education ignores or lacks elements of the warmly human - even though it may sometimes be only the humanity of error. Success and failure in life itself are too intimately constructed upon human relations and necessities that are not definable in terms of cold intellectuality. So quite apart from the human experiences that are inevitable in living in school or elsewhere, it is a purposeful function of education to develop skill in human associations, to develop elements of character that the experience of the race and the emotional reactions of men cherish as the most valuable in human life; to develop the appreciations and joys and happinesses that make life worth living. These essential parts of our educational responsibility are easily recognized as embodied in our educational system by instruction in the languages and literatures, in music, in fine arts, in history and in many another area not so clearly specialized for these purposes. In these areas, as elsewhere, it is educationally respectable, as well as inevitable, that learning and living comprehend within their scope concern for and appreciation of the thrill of words, the artistry of literature, the excitement and calm that come from color, the emotional therapy of sound and the dauntiness and grandeur of nature.

In this quotation as presenting an approved intellectual generation, there is in it no plea or proposal for

It is difficult to illustrate concretely the part that these matters play in the lives of us all, and impossible with words to call to your consciousness all the richness that these things contribute to our human nature. Yet I cannot resist the temptation to present to you a brief quotation in the hope that your response to beauty of word and rhythm of sentence may give a little more reality to the old statement that "Man does not live by bread alone." The quotation is one from an article by Will Durant upon the unlovely subject of war.

"Even the sophisticated mind, accustomed to magnitude and marvels, is appalled by the panorama of historic war War, to our pessimistic moments, seems to be the main and bloody current of history, beside which all the achievements of civilization, all the illumination of letters and the arts, all the tendernesses of women and the courtesies of men, are but graceful incidents on the bank, helpless to change the course or the character of the stream. In our saner moments we know that it is not so; that lucid intervals of peace far outweigh, in any nation's story, the mad seizures of war and revolution; that the history of civilization - of science and invention, law and morals, religion and philosophy, literature and art - runs like hidden gold in the river bed of time." There is, as you will note, in this quotation no penetrating or profound intellectual observation; there is in it no plan or proposal for

practical action. Its virtue consists in artistry of emotional appeal, in the use of words to touch the human spirit. So, to our conception of the functions of education represented by the accumulation of information and the development of impersonal intelligence, we must add the functions of developing beauty and character and humanity - if you will, the training and use of emotions and emotional appreciations.

Nor may we stop with the development of the intellect and of the human spirit if our conception of education is to be realistic. That is, if our conception of education is to conform to facts as we know them with respect to the interests and activities of man which, by planned experience, guidance and thought, may be refined, enriched and made more satisfactory and useful to the individual and society. Man does not live by bread alone, it is true, but food, clothing and shelter and the other necessities of existence are necessities and man does live in constant and insistent relationship to the means by which he gains a livelihood. Education that neglects or refuses to concern itself with these matters is obviously impractical, remote and inhuman. Inevitably, these concerns of practical living associate with themselves and motivate as much of intellectual effort and healthful emotion as do abstract scholarship and the pursuit of beauty for its own sake. The nature of the intellectual process and its intensity

may be the same whether applied to learning how to grow potatoes or to the study of the infra-red spectra of molecules. Both demand the same careful and continuous observation, the same discipline of inference, the same caution with respect to generalization, and the same repeated tests of truth.

In a recent publication devoted to research and invention issued in cooperation with this university appeared an article entitled, "The Self-Peeling Frankfurter". The opening sentence was, "The hot dog has learned to shed its shirt." An amusing way to put the fact to be sure, but behind the announcement may lie experimentation that was as demanding and intellectual effort and accomplishment that were of as high an order as those involved in certain investigations of the cosmic ray. Those who would set up a sharp contrast between the intellectual demands of vocational preparation and the pursuit of abstract learning would appear to limit the nature and values of intelligence in a curious and artificial fashion. In the same way those who would appear to insist that earning a living and performing the necessary tasks of physical existence are incompatible with beauty, artistry and joy, would seem to set up as their sole standard a kind of precious and artificial appreciation.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that education cannot, and does not wish in our public educational system, whether in kindergarten or university, to surround itself with a mist of erudition. It does not wish to define learning and scholarship in terms that are not vitalized by responsibility

for the human problems and interests that permeate the very fabric of our lives today and condition our hope that decency, happiness and democracy shall remain for man tomorrow. Public education is moving with ever greater certainty, with ever greater confidence and devotion, to acceptance of the challenge that it serve the whole range of human needs and aspirations. It is in the process of reconsecrating itself, not to a pale and anaemic life of cloistered withdrawal from the hum and whirl and clash of modern living, but to a life vitalized by participation in the work and play of the people and the society which created and cherish it for their service. Education that has its roots and its nourishment in democracy must and does accept the challenge of universality. Its ideals are those of a real world graced by responsibility and beauty. It defines intelligence and the cultivation of intelligence in terms that would utilize cold reason and human warmth, physical need and fairy dream, the sweat of labor and the fragrance of flowers, every fact and hope and emotion of living - it would utilize all these to deal with the handicaps, the discouragements, the limitations and pains of men in ways that are individually satisfactory and socially desirable. It finds in the association of intellectualism with emotional satisfaction, in the association of material aspiration with spiritual responsibility, no corruption of any of these things, but mutual helpfulness, reality and freedom. It seeks not the safety of smug or cloistered withdrawal, but the vitality and adventure to be found in the full and shifting currents of modern life.