

THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

Even the most idealistic of those who lead public opinion too often insist on examining educational institutions through the dull glasses of immediate utility. To be sure the promotion of learning usually appears to be worth saving even when viewed through such an unfavorable medium. The most relentless reformers are at least partially convinced that at some time almost all research may be materially rewarding. There is, however, a growing demand for more and more professional training, and there is a tendency to stretch the word "profession" until it comprises every vocation. The utilitarian demand for specialized vocational training and the practical man's contempt for useless knowledge go hand in hand. When such influences gain control, an institution of higher learning supplies training, not education, and

the promotion of learning is degraded to a vehicle for providing material well-being. The liberal arts conception of a general education disappears and with it the institution's most important contribution to the land. The universities of a country are the sanctuaries of the inner life of the nation. When they cease to be concerned with things of the spirit, they cease to fulfill their most important function.

If I am correct, then, in my interpretation of academic history, the future of the university tradition in America depends on keeping a proper balance between the four essential ingredients — the advancement of learning, the liberal arts college, professional training, and a healthy student life. None must be neglected; no one must be allowed to predominate unduly. If this balance can be maintained, the

universities of this country, privately endowed and publicly supported alike, will function both as instruments of higher education and as centers for developing a national culture worthy of this rich and powerful land . . .

To bring order out of an educational chaos is the mission of the liberal arts curriculum of our universities — that is why it is important that this ancient tradition be not overwhelmed. Those of us who have faith in human reason believe that in the next hundred years we can build an educational basis for a unified, coherent culture suited to a democratic country is a scientific age; no chauvinistic dogma, but a true national culture fully cognizant of the international character of learning. In this undertaking the schools are involved quite as much as the universities, but the latter must lead the way. The older educational discipline, whether we like it or not, was disrupted before any of us were born. It was based on the study of the classics and mathematics; it provided a common background which

steadied the thinking of all educated men. We cannot bring back this system if we would, but we must find its modern equivalent. Like our ancestors we must study the past, for "he who is ignorant of what occurred before he was born is always a child." In my opinion it is primarily the past development of our modern era which we must study and study most exhaustively and critically. We must examine the immediate origins of our political, economic, and cultural life and then work backwards. We must now, however, spread the inquiry over so wide a range that the average men will obtain only a superficial knowledge. It does not seem to me to be a step in the right direction to dip our children first in one barrel of tinted whitewash and then in another. The equivalent of the old classical discipline is not to be found in a bowing acquaintance with universal history and general science, and an exposure to scattered examples of art and literature. Our present educational practice which insists on the thorough study

of at least one discipline is certainly sound.

For the development of a national culture based on a study of the past, one condition is essential. This is absolute freedom of discussion, absolutely unmolested inquiry. We must have a spirit of tolerance which allows the expression of all opinions however heretical they may appear. Since the seventeenth century this has been achieved in the realm of religion. It is no longer possible for some bigoted Protestant to object if any person within the universities or without expounds sympathetically the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is no longer possible for a member of the Roman Catholic Church to take offense at a critical discussion of Galileo's trial. Statements believed to be erroneous are met only and fairly by counter arguments. But there is no persecution; there has been an end to religious bigotry in this country, and there are no signs of its return.

Will the same conditions prevail in the future when

political and economic problems are examined? Unfortunately there are ominous signs that a new form of bigotry may arise. This is most serious, for we cannot develop the unifying educational forces we so sorely need unless all matters may be openly discussed. The origin of the Constitution, for example, the functioning of the three branches of the Federal Government, the forces of modern capitalism, must be dissected as fearlessly as the geologist examines the origin of the rocks. On this point there can be no compromise; we are either afraid of heresy or we are not. If we are afraid, there will be no adequate discussion of the genesis of our national life; the door will be shut to the development of a culture which will satisfy our needs.

Harvard was found by dissenters. Before two generations had passed there was a general dissent from the first dissent. Heresy has long been in the air. We are proud of the freedom which has made this possible even when we most dislike

some particular form of heresy we may encounter.

In a debate in the House of Commons, Gladstone reviewed the history of Oxford and spoke of the lamentable condition of that institution during the reign of Queen Mary. Quoting a historian of that period he continued: "The cause of the failure is easy to discover. The Universities had everything, except the most necessary element of all —

Freedom: which by the immutable laws of nature, is always an indispensable condition of real and permanent prosperity in the higher intellectual cultivation and its organs." With this conclusion all who cherish our heritage must agree: without freedom the prosperity most important for this country cannot be achieved — the prosperity of our cultural life. — *By James Bryant Conant in Vital Speeches of the Day, July, 1936.*

OF PHILIPPINE TOURIST SPOTS

Filipinos should be thankful for the wonderful scenery and tourist spots that your country offers. We don't have those beautiful sceneries in Japan. If properly developed, the tourist spots in the Philippines will greatly enhance your tourist industry. — *Atsumi Ikeno, Miss Japan of 1968*