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THREE-YEAR TECHNICAL COURSES

ONE of the leading universities in the United States has announced, as a war measure, three-year courses in all branches of engineering in place of four years as heretofore, with a view to enabling students to earn a degree in the shorter time. To accomplish this properly will impose a large additional amount of work on the teaching staff and a considerable added cost to the university, but the student will gain one whole year of time in his life's work, and will save the cost of living expenses for one year without his being subjected to any really serious additional strain in his studies. By substituting three terms a year in place of two terms, and by shortening the summer vacation to one month, the university will be able to give to the student the same course in three years that is now given in four. The price of tuition for the three-year course will be the same as it was formerly for the four-year course.

Under the four-year course the university yearly had two terms of 17 weeks each, or 34 weeks in the year, which, in the four years, amounted to 136 weeks, of which two weeks yearly, or eight weeks in the course, were devoted to examinations, leaving 128 weeks for instruction. The president of the university declares that the full present course can be given in three years, without lessening the thoroughness of the different studies,

by introducing three terms of 14 weeks each, devoted entirely to instruction. There would thus be 42 weeks of study to the year, or 126 for the course, only two less than are now included in the four years.

This change involves the elimination of the final examination periods. The examinations will be taken care of by tests throughout the term. The proposed plan allows of one week's vacation at Christmas and one week's vacation in the spring, with eight weeks in the summer, three or four weeks of which will be devoted to the required summer schools in the practical work of the technical courses, leaving the men from four to five weeks for rest and vacation.

"This is certainly an ample provision in this time of war strain," says the president of the university, "and perhaps at any time. Our faculty feel that by the elimination of one of the existing spring vacations, the fixing of vacations at the end of the first and second terms, and the concentration of student social functions into one week at Christmas and in the spring, we shall greatly benefit by continuous work, and with the two rest periods of one week each, with classes closing not later than three o'clock on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, will give sufficient rest.

"It is believed that this change will appeal alike to students and parents. With the introduction of military training and the shortened course, a student can feel that he is preparing in the shortest time possible for efficient service, and that in pursuing his studies to their completion, with the addition of military training, he is gaining his education and professional diploma, and also receiving the military training desired by the war department, and has a distinct status in national service."

McGill University, the University of Toronto and many other Canadian universities are still observing the four-year course of technical studies. Whether the new idea of crowding the four years' work into three years will appeal to the heads of the Canadian universities or not, the experiment is well worth watching. If successful, the idea will appeal strongly to those students who are ambitious to get into useful work so soon as possible, and also to those whose supply of funds is limited. While announced as a war-time measure, it will no doubt be retained as a permanent policy if it proves successful.

The conservation of a year during war-time, enabling the quicker training of engineers for use at the front should the war last long enough to need their services, is an important consideration. The Canadian universities might well follow the lead of this enterprising American university in the war-time experiment. It should not be difficult to revert to the four-year course if for any reason the three-year course be found impracticable.

RAILROAD EFFICIENCY

EASTERN Regional Director Smith, of the United States Railroad Administration, has reported to Director General McAdoo that the following measures for efficient operation have been adopted since January 1st:—

- Elimination of 2,200,000 non-essential train miles.
- Reassignment of 365 locomotives.
- Transfer of power from one road to another.
- Diversion of traffic to less congested routes.
- Handling company fuel and material by direct routes.
- Common use of terminal facilities.
- Interchange of labor.