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that is a university

This week the Gazette devotes its issue to a commodity, education, in which, it is suspected, there is considerable interest at its source: a University.

If we were asked to describe as unidealistically and popularly as we could (as befits a child of the 20th century), what a University was supposed to be, we should draw our answer from its modern designation as a producer of necessary skills. This implies the assemblage of raw material from all part in one spot. Else, how will you find stuff to satisfy society's every desire? Else, how can there be any efficient production?

It is no wonder, then, that in the metropolitan press there have lately been reports containing dark forebodings of "imminent" professorial migrations. It seems clear that we are again being compelled to take stern account of the fact that there is a great world beyond the St. Lawrence. Montreal's and Toronto's hoary voices are heard once more, in the long darkness of the Nova Scotian night, croaking of light and warmth to be felt thousands of miles away from our blustery Atlantic shores.

After all, is this concentration in the centre not what efficiency demands for cheapest cost per unit production? And are we not being told on all sides that the University must produce more graduates? In its basic form, a University is considered a producer of experts of every kind, a place for the preparation of the best possible brains to be distributed, by means of marketing, through a wide extent of country.

There is nothing exalted or useless in the idea thus presented to us: and if this be a University, then a University does but contemplate a necessity of our nation. Production is one of the great occupations of human society, carried on partly with great ends in view, and partly not. One generation provides the material basis for the comfort of another; and the existing generation is ever making and re-making in the interests of its own material welfare.

In this process, books, that is, *litera non profunda sed utiles*, are one special instrument. It may be asked, what more is needed? There, it may be urged, is sufficient protection from the ordeal of original thought. But, if we wish to become useful and fully trained in any practical art which is intricate and complex, we must consult the living man and imitate his vital skills.

This principle is so obvious, that we should think it tiresome to go into the subject, except that one or two illustrations may serve to explain our own language about it. We admit we have not been in Mock Parliament, any more than we have figured in the beau monde of the coffee-house; yet we cannot but think that social acceptability is achieved, not by books, but in such places.

As regards development of character, we find a remarkable instance of the principle which we are illustrating, in the football matches. Such gatherings would to many appear at first sight simply preposterous. Character is nurtured through dicta and through percepts. Yet on a closer attention to the subject, it is found that not even character development can dispense with the instruction, the stimulus, the intercourse with mankind on a large scale, which football games secure. A fine time of year is chosen, when the term is short, society is sparkling, the Gazette appears anew, and all nature rejoices.

Such meetings are but periodical, and only partially represent the idea of a University. The bustle and whirl which are their usual concomitants suit well, however the pattern of socialized education. We desiderate means of instruction which involve no erosion of established standards.

But we have said more than enough. We end as we began: a University is suspected to be a place of concourse, wither students come from every quarter to be produced. It is a seat of progress, a light of science, a minister to material aspirations. It is a great deal more, and demands a somewhat clearer eye to describe it well.

—colunchill.

editorial comment

make good use

(The Financial Post)

The recent DBS Survey of Higher Education in Canada reveals that only 7.3% of our total college-age population is actually in college. Many Canadians are seeking ways to increase that proportion; to see that more young people reach university.

This concern with volume obscures a much more important question: are the 7.3% of young Canadians who reach college the right ones? Could the lecture rooms and laboratories be put to better use by a quite different group of college-age Canadians? One experienced professor suggests that of the students now in universities probably less than a third have the intellectual capacity for serious scholarship, and of these only one half really know what they are doing and are willing to work hard.

Russian education has been criticized because it is concentrated on the few. Only a minority of students reach university; the rest leave school at 14. The minority is an intellectual elite, admitted to university because of proven capacity and kept in university only as long as they are willing to work. This, say American critics, is undemocratic.

The Russians do a great many things that are undemocratic. But screening of university admissions isn't one of them. Nowhere in the literature of liberalism and democracy is there a line that says a B.A. degree or its equivalent is the inalienable right of every citizen.

In no other field is it regarded as unworthy to select the top performers for special treatment. It would be unthinkable for every Canadian boy to expect to play NHL hockey. Obviously, only a few have the skill and stamina to merit such an opportunity. No one supposes that every child who can thump a few notes on the piano should one day graduate from the Royal Academy of Music. Only the universities, it seems, are expected to open their doors to everyone who has the price of tuition.

There's not much doubt that Canadian university facilities need expanding, especially in some fields. But along with the expansion — preferably ahead of it — should come some real attention to the problem of seeing to it that our scarce facilities for higher learning are used by the Canadians who can make good use of the experience and contribute suitably to the community as a result.

concern

(The Vancouver Sun)

Financing the present program and expected expansion of Canadian universities, although presenting serious problems, is not the major difficulty facing Canadian education today. The fundamental concern of Canadians must be this: How can we lure three to five times as many young people in proportion to our population into taking advanced training?

The facts of the case were clearly stated recently by concerned officials. In Vancouver, Otto Fisher, education expert of the Defence Research Board, and in Ottawa, E. P. Sheffield, of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, each told half the story.

Mr. Fisher told the Chemical Institute of Canada that by 1960 Russia will be training five times as many civilian scientists and engineers as Canada, in proportion to population. Russia at the moment has 614 students in her engineering and medical schools for every 100,000 of her population. Canada has 494.

Mr. Sheffield told the National Conference of Canadian Universities the U. S. enrollment for 1953 - 54 was 23.3 percent of the college age population, compared with Canada's 7.3 percent. That is, the U. S. has proportionally three times our student population.

We must always remember that Russia is concentrating with almost frightening singleness of purpose on scientists and technicians, neglecting the arts and humanities that in the long run have such a tremendous role to play in any civilization. But that does not explain away our poor showing with regard to the United States. Nor does it account for the seriousness with which the U. S. regards the picture. How much more concerned should Canada be?

the reason why

(The Toronto Varsity)

The reason for the West's lag behind Russia in education is this: we've got too much democracy in our classrooms. The problem became even more evident when the United States office of education released a study of Soviet schools.

In public and high school, the report shows, Russian kids work harder, longer, and tackle more difficult subjects and don't play as much time away. Emphasis is on hard knowledge rather than on progressive education, doing as one likes, and sparing the child's sensitivities. The main stream of Soviet

education leads to the universities. Teachers more highly trained than here, occupy a high prestige position among Soviet workers.

But what continues to happen in North American schools? Teachers are underpaid, undertrained and unappreciated. Youngsters learn their abc's in third grade, because educators don't consider them ready for anything but "word recognition" before that time. As a result they may never learn to spell, and at the age of eight or nine can't understand the words in street signs, comic-books or newspapers.

Youngsters are taught to compute by rote during a ten-year period, before beginning to touch on the real stimulation of speculative mathematics. Their teaching in geometry, for instance, ignores 100 years of recent theorizing.

All these factors bring students to university who can't read intelligently, can't piece together a sentence, can't think for themselves, can't act maturely and aren't interested in learning for themselves.

In a vicious circle, this failure has brought us a teacher shortage and a superfluity of poorly-qualified teachers. In the current crisis with Russia we see how our science and mathematics have fallen because pupils have blissfully followed their immature minds into the easiest courses possible. Our children are suffering and the ideals of our society are suffering because of the failure of democracy in education.

Where are the answers? How can we produce an intelligent population with understanding of freedom and a willingness to think for itself?

The first answer must be found at age 5, when British pupils enter school. Start our North American children in school then too. Give them the challenge of learning at that early age and don't be afraid it will warp their tiny sensitivities.

Cut out the "do-as-you-like, let's talk this over" attitudes in our present educational systems. Start pupils learning to read, at age 5, by showing them the mechanical basis of our language, the alphabet. Step up the concentration of material to learn in our schools, as the Russians have done. Finally, cut out the emphasis on social adjustment in our schools. People adjust to each other by living, studying and playing together. Learning is the aim of our schools, and if this is kept in mind, social adjustment will come incidentally.

Democracy and progressivism in education can be applied when students are mature enough to benefit by them, in university. What we've forgotten, and what we need to get back to, is straight learning.

