

American Universities Today

Dr. W. H. Alexander, Emeritus Professor of Classics in the University of California and for six years Chairman of the Department of Classics there, was in Halifax the early part of November to deliver a lecture for the Royal Society of Canada.

Dr. H. L. Stewart in a radio interview put to him a series of questions on the present state of American Universities. These questions, with a summary of Dr. Alexander's answers, we print below, as we feel that they are of definite interest and concern to all University students.

The visitor is a Canadian by birth and early training. He held professorships at the University of Western Ontario and the University of Alberta (where he was Dean of Arts) before settling at Berkeley, California.

1. I understand, Professor Alexander, that you have been Chairman of the Department of Classics in the University of California for a good many years. What size has that University now reached?

Dr. Alexander explained that, with its seven campuses at different places, it has now some 40,000 students.

2. Perhaps you noticed, as we did in Canadian Universities, a striking difference in post-war academic conditions. In the matter of size, for example. Do you think that further expansion of numbers, larger and larger enrolment, is desirable? Or would you favor the alternative of more Vocational Colleges, like the Vocational Schools, to draw off those that are not of genuinely "academic material"?

The visitor was very emphatic in his answer to this. He regards the recent rush to College as anything but an improvement. There was enormous congestion, he said, of lecture-rooms with students quite unprepared to profit by real University training, and he would cordially welcome the proposed "Vocational Colleges" to relieve the University of those it would be better without.

3. Have you been getting from schools — as distinguished from those who come at an age later, if not more mature — students as well prepared as students from the schools used to be for University work?

Dr. Alexander's answer to this was very sombre. He would give no countenance to the optimistic estimate that "They are just as good as ever". They may be, he thinks, as good for something else, but for what a University exists to promote in cultural development they sadly lack the fitness of freshmen of the past. He quoted some painful examples of the effort the University of California has had to make to provide teaching which should have been given in the schools before the student matriculated. There was a marked contrast, he said, between the "G.I.'s" (known to us as "Veterans") and those now coming from schools. The G.I.'s had proved eager and

diligent in their work. But in the schools of the present an unfortunate atmosphere has developed, unfavorable to genuine learning. The spirit of the time was one of a hunt above all for lucrative jobs, and this was encouraged by those who should know better, making the youth of the present think of education as for no other purpose than to equip the student for making money as soon as possible. Hence the demoralization, depressing studies of priceless cultural value, to make room for passports to a job.

4. Do you think there is ground for the lament, so often heard, that academic standards have been lowered, that there has been a "levelling down", to make room for those not really fitted to go to College but eager to go?

The answer given to this was that the lament was shamefully well grounded. Dr. Alexander spoke of the tendency in American Universities to make standards low enough to attract and keep students. He deplored the mania for a large enrolment at no matter what sacrifice of real academic values, and the sinking of great sums of money in ostentatious buildings (often to perpetuate some donor's name!) rather than promotion of teaching capacity.

5. It is often said that to get the right kind of instructor in Arts and Science Faculties (anywhere, indeed, except in the Professional Schools) has become steadily harder. Is it too low salaries that the difficulty is chiefly due?

Dr. Alexander said he did not feel that low salaries were the main deterrent which kept properly qualified men and women from entering the Faculties of the University of California, which naturally he knows best: there was no ground there for that particular complaint. But when asked the next question he had a story by no means so favourable.

6. What about the principle called "Academic Freedom" — the right of the University teacher to express his genuine, uncensored convictions on controversial matters which fall in his field?

The Motion

Presented by Ron Robertson on behalf of the heads of campus societies.

On behalf of the heads of the majority of University societies I would like to bring to the attention of the students the extremely precarious position of student activities on the campus. Student societies and activities are an integral part of the University. They are important for the students and for the general reputation of the University. The students gain experience, friends, and pleasure, as well as broadening their education. They become a part of the University. The reputation of the University depends in part on them in that if there are no active activities the students do not receive complete education, future students are discouraged from coming, and one of the most effective means of publicising the University to the public is lost. If the reputation of the University goes down the Degrees of the Students are of less value as warrants of competency and education.

Most of the activities are in need

Dr. Alexander spoke very severely about recent invasions of this right. The imposition of intellectual fetters, the turning of a University teacher into the agent of propaganda satisfactory to a Board of Governors, was in his view most likely to divert to other pursuits the very men a University most needs.

7. Are there, then, any structural changes in University direction and management which you think recent experience has shown to be needful or desirable?

On this matter Dr. Alexander had definite proposals. He thinks the Presidents of American Universities should have their powers sharply curtailed. He is all on the side of those in academic institutions who are faithful to the ideal of a place of learning, directed by men of learning, not by those who have hardly any acquaintance with higher studies, and by whom, if they have charge of it, the real University purpose will be caricatured. The American President, he said, is too often just the economic agent of the Board of Governors or Regents, whereas he should be the spokesman for the Faculty to the Board. Structural change in the direction of committing University guidance to the Faculties (who will do a better job for culture, even if they erect fewer buildings of vulgar display) seems to this Canadian of long experience across the border the most urgently needed academic reform in the United States.

New Med Professors at Forrest

New professors on the Medical Science campus this year include Dr. Ronald D. Stewart, Asst. Prof. of Bio-chemistry; Dr. J. G. Kaplan, Asst. Prof. of Physiology, and Dr. R. J. Weil, Asst. Prof. of Psychiatry. Dr. Stewart, Canadian by birth, studied at McGill University and received his Ph.D. there in

1948. He worked under the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology in Massachusetts for two years, coming to Dalhousie in September of this year. His research work is conducted in endocrinology and protein chemical.

Dr. Kaplan took his B.A. from the College of the City of New York in 1943, his M.A. from Columbia in 1948, and his Ph.D. from the same university in 1950. After receiving his B.A. he taught at the C.C.N.Y. for four years. He served overseas with the American forces during the war and after being discharged he studied at the Sorbonne, working at various biological stations in France.

Dr. R. J. Weil, Assist. Prof. of Psychiatry, was born in Czechoslovakia and graduated from the medical faculty at Prague in 1933. He did post-grad work in Vienna, coming to Canada in 1939 where he worked as a general practitioner in Saskatchewan from 1940 until 1942. He took out Canadian citizenship and in 1945 received his license from the Medical Council of Canada. In 1947 he received a certificate from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada as a specialist in psychiatry.

of support and help. More particularly the Glee Club, the Gazette, and Publicity. The faculty societies and others are in need of support.

In consideration of this the heads of the Societies Move that:

The Students Council approach the Senate to jointly consider the problem of Student Inactivity and more particularly:

1. Statement of Attitude on Student Participation in Organizations.
2. Residence, of what type and when?
3. Financial Aid where and when necessary.

The Students' Council obtain a statement from the Deans of the Faculties w. r. t. Student Participation in Organization. This statement to be published.

That the above shall be done and reported by Nov. 28, 1950.

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