

# —this is a human being



Macedon. Some of his predictions became horrible truths just a few years later.

Ironically, the war years put Dr. Walter Johns on the road to the university's top administrative post, or as he puts it: "The first step down the primrose path was the time in getting the pouring in of returned servicemen registered." That year, 1945, he became assistant to the dean of arts and sciences and began his study of the "art of administration."

In 1957, the year of the Sputnik, he moved from the office of the dean of the faculty to vice-president's quarters.

## MAN A PUPPET?

"The time was right for a great thrust forward in the physical sciences. But today, the great need is for emphasis to be placed on the social sciences and the humanities. We lack so much an understanding of man in isolation and in society. There is too much emphasis on man as a puppet. Blake and Browning may not have been scientific in the modern sense that if you stick a pin in a man here, he jumps one foot, and if you stick it there, two feet, but they have something to say.

"We might approach a knowledge of man by restudying the views of the great minds of the past and one of the best sources is the Bible or the great Greek and Roman classics, or through Heine, Goethe, Racine, Moliere."

As for 1959 and the presidency: "Well, I think I could say it was perfectly obvious that someone had to do it and I was prevailed upon to accept that it was my responsibility and I should get on with it." He describes it as more of a draft than anything else.

The president is no politician. He wonders how The Gateway editor would feel if his position

were subjected to the electoral process in a manner similar to that proposed by the paper for the selection of presidential successors. He says no worthwhile candidate would allow his name to stand for an elected presidency.

The man who paid the tribute to Premier Manning upon his retirement "can't understand why anyone wants to be a premier of Alberta, prime minister of Canada, president of the United States."

Nor can he understand the sometimes "vicious", sometimes "destructive" actions of students. "They're desperately serious, these long-haired types. I can't help get the feeling sometimes, maybe I'm wrong, that their actions are malicious.

"They should try to see the possibility of good in things instead of only the relentless march of evil. Some of them seem to have, I was going to say lost hope, or at best they are terribly pessimistic about reform of society.

"They've lost their sense of fun. Certainly a lot of these people have no sense of humour. And of course their response would be there is nothing to be funny about."

In the main, the president believes that students from the western provinces, because they are closer to the pioneer period of our national growth, have a greater appreciation of the value of education.

"They come here with a pretty serious idea about getting an education. It is the same in the Maritimes. But in the East, they reflect the urban unhappiness of the older cities."

At this university, he sees two related major concerns his successor will have to grapple with.

"One is the emphasis on research, which to be effective must

in most cases extend our knowledge on a narrow front, and it means people become more and more narrowly specialized. At the undergraduate level it is at least very unfortunate because at particularly this level you need a person with a broad knowledge of the field.

"The emphasis is on research to the exclusion of instruction at the undergrad level. Professors, more interested in research than teaching, take on a teaching position and their interests are too narrow." The president considers much research to be no more than "occupational therapy for professors."

His hope that we might have graduate programs that encourage breadth of approach instead of depth is now "certainly not looming on the horizon."

## A PRESIDENT'S LOSS

Dr. Walter H. Johns lost something very special when he left the classroom—close contact with his students, a something that is very precious to him. It is a loss he mentions at the supper table when he speaks over the ice cream of the students' automatic response of fear towards the president's position. The motto of the Berkeley students—"do not bend, staple or mutilate, this is a human being"—applies just as much to this man as any (although he might prefer to see it translated into Latin).

Dr. Walter H. Johns lives in that big house on the northwest corner of the campus. If once upon a time he had to rent the undertaker's chairs, now he has a living room he doesn't live in. There is a smaller room visible from the lobby-like entrance. It is comfortably untidy, its furniture is comfortably worn. Here is where a man can lean back, set down his glass of Vermouth or Scotch and water without fear of staining the furniture, crack open the day's paper—and read about all the student unrest.

There are two things in this house of which he is particularly proud. The first is the collection of paintings which line the walls of the spacious home and the second and more important is his bulging bookcase.

In this case there are rows behind rows of books. "Where is it, well, it's here somewhere, I hope. I may have loaned it to someone and not got it back." He finds it—"Mostly in Clover" by Harry Boyle.

## A REAL JEWEL

"This is exactly what I went through: mortgages, country characters, the hired man. Here, I have a real jewel that I hide." After much rummaging: "That's an Elzevir, printed in Amsterdam in 1671. If you want a real old one, it's a bit mouse-chewed but 1602.

"Oh no! Here's the REAL jewel: 'The Bubbles of Canada' by Haliburton, 1839. I got it for 50 cents in a little place in B.C. I told him I thought that the book was more valuable but he said 'not to me it ain't', so I bought a \$7.50 'Letters of Queen Victoria' and felt a little better."

Another book leaves its place and is eagerly thumbed through: "All these plates, beautiful plates, real pretty ones—if you like that sort of thing," he adds with a worried glance in case this is boring the onlooker.

So Dr. Walter H. Johns will leave his post, move his books and start his research for a history of the university to 1967.

It still hurts him when he speaks of the university as a place of learning and light, and people say: "Oh yeah!"

