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By

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

David Kinley, President University of Illinois

THE CURRICULUM AND SOME OF ITS CONSEQUENCES

Some time ago, walking behind two students, I overheard part of their conversation. They were discussing their class work in economics and sociology. One of them remarked to the other, in substance, "I am all mixed up about this tax business. The professor of economics says one thing, and the professor of sociology says the opposite thing."

The incident strengthened my purpose to ask your attention today to a subject that has been on my mind for many months, but about which I hesitate to speak, partly because constructive suggestions about the situation I am about to describe are difficult; and partly because, in the absence of such suggestions, what I want to say might seem like mere fault-finding. Accordingly, I offer what I have to say rather as questions to think about than as a set of statements of established or even provable facts.

I ask your attention to the present general condition of our undergraduate programs of studies, their number and variety, the tendency to establish new departments of work by splitting up old ones, and the resulting influence on the character of education and the educational aim.

CATALOG EXAMINATION

A comparison of the university curriculum of today with that of thirty-five or forty years ago, especially if the examination be continued through successive years, shows, of course, tremendous changes. The field of instruction is far larger than it was forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten years ago. A goodly number of new subjects have been put into the curriculum. What were once homogeneous departments have been split up into subordinate or coördinate new departments or divisions. In not a few cases the field occupied by one of these offshoots is as large, so far as concerns the amount of knowledge covered by it, as the field of the entire department a generation ago. In some of these departments or divisions, more "courses" are offered than were offered years ago in the entire field of which the new subject is an

offshoot. Without going away from home for any horrible example, I may illustrate what I mean by pointing out that about forty years ago the University of Illinois offered curricula in mechanical engineering, civil engineering, mining engineering, and architecture. It now announces fifteen four-year curricula in engineering. The College of Commerce, which existed only in name some forty years ago, offers, I believe, thirteen different four-year curricula. Similar illustrations might be given of the increase in the number of four-year programs of study offered in every university. These are not all new so far as their names are concerned. The University of Illinois and others had their schools of commerce, domestic science, chemistry, journalism, and their departments of agricultural engineering, agricultural architecture, rural economy (now called agricultural economics), rural law, and so forth, certainly as long as forty years ago. Although some of the old names have been revived they generally imply a very different thing from what they implied in the earlier years of which I am speaking.

The multiplication of curricula is paralleled with multiplication of departments.

We were content once, and our contentment was then educationally justifiable, with a department that had oversight of political science, of physical science, and so forth. Now we seem hardly respectable unless we have a department of political science, with possibly a separate department of public administration; a department of economics, with perhaps a department of agricultural economics; a department of sociology, and perhaps a department of finance; to say nothing of the economics of business organization and procedure, accountancy, business law, etc. We must provide "Business" English and "German" for Engineers. We must mark out separate programs for the prospective electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, and other kinds of engineers; for the agricultural journalist and for his metropolitan kin. We no longer, in a sense, train chemists. We train industrial chemists, physiological chemists, and other varieties. The time was, when one program, or two, or three, sufficed; when one department covered the whole scientific field implied by its name. Now, we have sub-species and varieties.

In short, the field of education, as represented by the programs of study of the universities and colleges, has not only become greatly extended, by the addition of new subjects and the splitting up of old ones; but also has become more complex because of the

application, or attempted application, of some of these branches of knowledge to new fields of activity. For example, the application of chemistry, physics, and physiology to the field of agriculture, and the more recent application of economics to the same field, will illustrate what I mean by 'growing complexity.' It is a complexity due both to additions and to differentiation. Yesterday, we had the field of natural philosophy. Now we have physics, and electricity, and zoölogy, and physiology, and a large number of other new subjects which were once part of the large field in discussion, in education, as well as in fact.

SOME CAUSES OF THIS CONDITION

One can hardly reach entirely sound conclusions concerning the direction of the drift of our educational policy or of the changes in its character so far as they have been caused by, or are reflected in, the changes which I have briefly described, without considering somewhat the causes of which the present condition is the consequence.

A good deal of the so-called expansion of our educational program is due to the pressure of special interests or of people specially interested in certain subjects. This cause I need not dwell on. It is obvious and familiar. For example, it is from this cause that we have the tremendous movement for vocational education. To this cause, in large measure, is due the existence of our colleges of agriculture, and engineering, and commerce, and a large number of the varied curricula or programs of study in these and other divisions of our universities.

A second cause of the situation which I am discussing, although a minor one, is what I may perhaps, call pressure from the inside. Faculties, or individual members of faculties, representatives of departments of study who have been specially interested in subdivisions, have in some cases pushed their special interests into separately organized departments. The self-interest of the faculty member or members is here the moving force. It has not always been an enlightened self-interest in that it has sometimes seemed to spring from a desire of the individual for his personal advancement. There has been here some play of senatorial courtesy and faculty politics in, I presume, all of our institutions, without full regard to the general welfare. For faculties sometimes forget that universities exist and are supported primarily in the interest of the students to be educated. They are not

created primarily to give positions to us who compose the faculty or to open up opportunities for careers for specialists.

Another cause of the differentiation of the field of study is found, I believe, in some of the psychological theories that have become temporarily popular in the past twenty years. I think we were at one time told, for example, that there is no such thing as general talent; that all talent is special and that, therefore, different individuals must get their education by study of subjects in special fields to which they are adapted. We have been told that it is foolish to think of getting mental training by what have been described as the mental gymnastics of studying mathematics, the languages, and sundry other subjects that do not have some obvious utility or reference to specific callings, or specific adaptation to the character and purposes of the particular student. I think, although I am not sure, that this educational theory rests on what is called the doctrine of interest and liberty. I suppose that on the same reasoning it is foolish to expect to keep in good physical condition by setting-up exercises, that we must resort to games adapted to different individuals for this purpose. The psychologists, of course, are not altogether to blame either for the extreme statement of some of their doctrines or the foolish application of some of them. But in spite of all that has been said, it seems to me that the evidence is heavily on the side of belief in both general talent and general mental training as being possible on the side of so-called non-utilitarian subjects. We may call this mental gymnastics, but does not the very use of the term gymnastics indicate that even the doubters may have a lingering suspicion that such gymnastics may be useful in mental development? However, the influence of the other view has been in the direction of subdividing our educational field into experimental plots.

A similar influence has been exercised by the educational theorists of whom our much loved and distinguished professor John Dewey is undoubtedly the leader. Their influence has been in the direction of discarding standards in favor of hypothetical ideals; one of the principal of which is that the growing child has an innate will to service and will develop best in complete freedom. I can not help agreeing with Professor Irving Babbitt on this matter when he says, "If we look, however, on this form of spontaneity as a romantic myth, we shall be forced to conclude that we have been permitting Professor Dewey and his kind to have an in-

fluence on our education that amounts in the aggregate to a national calamity; that with progress of ideals of this kind our higher education in particular is, from the point of view of a genuinely liberal training, in danger of becoming a vast whir of machinery in the void; finally, that, in the interest of our experiment in free institutions, we need educational leaders who will have less to say of service and more to say of culture and civilization, and who will so use these words as to show that they have some inkling of their true meaning."

The theories of "interest" and "liberty" of choice of studies, like many other educational generalizations, sound and read well. As long ago as 1876, one could read in the catalog of what is now the University of Illinois, these statements:

The University was designed not for children, but young men and women, who may claim to know something of their wants, powers, and tastes. It is not useful to require every student, without regard to his capacity or practical wants, to take entire some lengthened 'course of study.' Liberty everywhere has its risks and responsibilities, as well as its benefits—in school as well as in society; but it is yet to be proved that compulsory scholarship is necessarily better, riper, and more certain than that which is free and self-inspired. Each student is exhorted to weigh carefully his own powers and needs, to counsel freely with his teacher, to choose with serious and independent consideration the branches which he may need to fit him for his chosen career, and then to pursue them with earnestness and perseverance, without faltering or fickleness.

This is a fine doctrine and if university students were as mature as the writer—and the rest of us, for that matter—at one time seemed to think, more could be said for it. But we know now that entire freedom of choice is disastrous and there is reason to think that even the freedom of choice in existence today in most of our institutions is not, to say the least, bringing about the results that were once hoped for. That the University authorities had some lingering doubts about the fullness of the wisdom of the statement quoted above is shown by the fact that farther on in the same page we are told that the faculty have carefully arranged several courses of studies which are expected to be followed by those who have no special reason for diverging from them.

We must ascribe some influence in promoting this educational expansion and differentiation to the intense desire for what is called specialization, enthusiasm for which was aroused originally by the rich results of intensive study of some particular

fields, particularly in the natural sciences. A movement such as this towards specialization is always overdone.

Some of the splitting up, if I may call it so, has been done deliberately as a result of well considered judgment that it is either educationally or scientifically needful or desirable.

Still again, new subjects have come into the purview of our educational bodies and have naturally become fields of separate study. From these have arisen departments and subdivisions of departments that, in many cases, are entirely justifiable.

Very likely other influences have contributed to the situation, but it is not necessary to treat the subject exhaustively, for our main interest lies in the situation itself.

ADDITIONAL CAUSE OF DIFFERENTIATION OF CURRICULUM

A consideration of some of the so-called specialized fields of study leads one to wonder where educational wisdom and administrative restraint were when these subjects were permitted to enter the curriculum. There would appear to be some ground for believing that the desire to prevent a falling off in registration was an influential reason for some new courses. For example, we have had colleges of agriculture which for a generation or more have been studying real agriculture, although in recent years the number of students taking such work has been falling off. But that must not be permitted, so we will put into our colleges of agriculture some subjects with the word agriculture in their names so that enrollment in them will add to our number. Accordingly we have agricultural economics, rural sociology (whatever that may be), agricultural engineering, and possibly in time we may have agricultural athletics, agricultural psychology, and so on. Now the appropriateness of studying problems that have specific application to agriculture or to industry or to trade is obvious enough. Is it not possible, however, that a mistake has been made in separating these small portions from their general fields? This educational movement appears to me to be a part of that general class movement which has manifested itself in various ways in our country and elsewhere in the past generation. The universities, by permitting these special departmental subdivisions have fostered the movement towards class consciousness. Of course I use the agricultural subjects merely as an illustration. I might have used any one of several others.

Again, certain fields have been pushed into the foreground of public attention, the substantiality of which is an open question

in the minds of some thoughtful people. Consider, for example, the field of education. We all have our colleges or schools of education. We once thought that our colleges and universities were themselves colleges and schools of education. When one reads the literature of this field he is tempted, as he is when he reads some of the literature of what is called sociology and psychology, to wonder whether after all the so-called field of study did not emerge into public attention simply because its devotees invented a terminology and then thought they had a science. I have wondered sometimes whether a belief that this process correctly describes the situation is not the real explanation of the attitude of passive resistance towards the introduction of these subjects which has been shown by members of other departments in the educational field. Certain it is that some of the so-called scientific material put forth in the name of professional education and sociology and psychology is wonderful stuff. As one writer remarks somewhere, my sociological friend tells me that "it is a phenomenon peculiar to urban life, that the social strata are more or less clearly defined geographically;" which, put into a plain man's English, means that people of different degrees of wealth live in different parts of the city. This is not a wonderful discovery but the phraseology used gives a wonderful dignity.

The educational results of the trend in undergraduate education to which I have called your attention are of importance to the public and to us who are responsible in a measure for educational administration. Critics of the present situation allege that the following are some of the evils:

- (1) Superficiality in our education.
- (2) Failure to turn out graduates with the ability to become leaders in matters of public policy.
- (3) Failure to turn out graduates who can grasp problems as a whole even in their own professions.
- (4) A change in the essential aim of our educational policy.
- (5) The absence from our faculties of men with either the knowledge or ability to correlate their particular subjects of instruction with collateral and allied subjects.
- (6) Failure to give students a broad view of their fields of study.
- (7) Conflicts of authority in instruction which are confusing to the student.

Critics of the situation insist that we are turning out superficially educated men and women, and that the cause is in part that there are too many subjects and too much subdivision of subjects in our curriculum. But it seems to me that this criticism is too general and does not rest upon a careful analysis of the situation. For a large number of so-called new subjects have come into our program of study because new classes of people were calling for higher education in those new lines. The fact that the fields are new is not proof that study of them is superficial; nor is the subdivision of the fields of study of itself proof of superficiality, so far as these fields of study are for the purpose of preparing for special callings, and have an educational substance sufficient to train for these special callings. In short, the mere number of subjects of study and the mere subdivision of many of them into smaller fields of study do not for themselves prove superficiality.

Some think, however, that the gravest criticism of our present educational policy and procedure in undergraduate instruction is that it is not producing the so-called all-round educated man, who may be looked to as a leader of public opinion and policy on the general matters of society's life. Professor Irving Babbitt remarks: "The old education was, in intention at least, a training for wisdom and character. The new education has been summed up by President Eliot in the phrase: training for service and power. . . . The older education was based on the belief that men need to be disciplined to some ethical centre." In consequence, it is held, we are getting graduates who are efficient as engineers, as agriculturalists, as business men; but few who have acquired wisdom, balanced judgment, and tempered self-control as a result of their university education. More than that, some declare, our present educational policy has not a close relation to the essential character of our American political society. The Aristotelian test of the soundness of an educational system in any country, we are told, is that it must be "in intimate correspondence with our form of government." Ours fails somewhat in that test in spite of our calls for education in citizenship. It fails because our too prevalent notion of what constitutes education for citizenship is acquaintance with the mechanism of government rather than knowledge and love of the essential character or spirit of the nation. We fail to make clear to the student a knowledge of what in Professor Stuart Sherman's fine phrase

is the "genius of America." We fail, therefore, to instill into the hearts of our students a passionate affection for that spirit of America.

But the critics who charge our modern university system with failing to give the education necessary to produce the kind of leaders needed in a democratic republic, are mistaken, in my judgment, in alleging the enlargement of our educational program as the cause of that alleged result. As I have remarked already, most of these new subjects have been introduced as a result of discoveries of new knowledge and because there were great classes of people seeking an education whose aim is efficiency rather than leadership.

Some defenders of the new situation meet the criticism by declaring that we do not want leaders, that every educated man may easily be a leader in matters of public policy. We are told that to try to educate such a group is to create an aristocracy of intellect. I can not, myself, agree with this view. In a democratic republic it is impossible to make every individual member intelligent on all matters of public policy and sober minded enough about them to prevent mass action on the basis of emotion and prejudice. That this is true we have plenty of evidence today. A political society like ours will always need men like Washington and Lincoln who dare to oppose the public passion of the moment and depend upon the sober second thought of the people. Such leaders of public opinion have standards to which, with humility, they try to attain. They are men who can anticipate and wait for the sober judgment of the people and take the momentary consequences of popular illwill. We need leaders of that kind in every field of our societal activity. We need them especially on great matters of public policy. Now it is true that men educated for efficiency, as in our engineering, and agricultural, and business courses are not likely to be trained to leadership of this kind by their courses of study. That is not the purpose of those courses of study. We may occasionally get a great leader in the field of general public policy from the groups thus educated, but ordinarily we must not expect that. It is foolishness for us to look to Mr. Henry Ford for expert advice on our monetary policy because he has shown great genius in a certain manufacturing industry; or to expect wise advice from Mr. Edison on education because he has shown genius in electrical research. Yet there is too much of that sort of thing in our American life. Leadership by university men on great questions of public policy

is likely to lie in the main with men with what we call an all-round education in the more or less old fashioned sense.

That we are not providing such an education, suitable to train for leadership in the sense that I have described, is not due, however, to the introduction or the expansion of our varied program of vocational, professional, and semi-professional fields of study. Our colleges and courses of liberal arts still exist. If they are functioning towards the old ideal of colleges of liberal arts, there would appear to be no good reason why they should not turn out now a product as well qualified for leadership as they did in other days simply because along side of them have grown up many courses of study with a different aim and appealing to great classes of people.

What then is a possible explanation of the alleged failure to turn out men and women educated in the old way? May it not be found in the fact that the protagonists of the study of the humanities have changed their educational aim and methods to conform to those of curricula established for other purposes than theirs. Perhaps with a feeling that it was necessary to compete with these newer subjects, have not they too made efficiency and service their aim and standard instead of wisdom, character, and leadership? They have followed the professors of the new fields of study in splitting up their subjects and promoting specialization and training for mere thoroughness in subdivisions of their fields. One incidental, if not the main result, has been that in the humanities we are now training for teaching and research instead of educating in an all-round way. In other words, we have injected the professional or efficiency spirit and aim into these subjects too exclusively for purposes of general education.

To make my meaning clear I would remind you that the subjects of study in the colleges of liberal arts have been subdivided minutely. Too frequently we do not have a course in history for freshmen; we have courses in English history and American history, or worse than that, the "Stuart period" the Pre-Revolutionary period, The Period from the Adoption of the Constitution to the Civil War, the Period from the Civil War to the World War, and so forth. We do not any longer have a course in political science; we have courses in American National Government, State and Local Government, Government in Illinois or Wisconsin, Constitutional Aspects of Social and Industrial Problems, State Administration, and so forth. Even in the line of language and literature we not infrequently find instead of the general course in

literature a list of very special courses such as, The Poetry of Milton, Contemporary European Drama, English Literature from 1688 to 1789, and so forth.

Now economics, plus political science, plus sociology does not equal the science of society; nor does one who has taken college courses in the three fields become thereby capable of sound judgment on matters of public policy, political, economic, or general. Physiology, plus anatomy, plus pathology, and so forth, does not give us the science of medicine; nor is one who has taken courses in all the fields necessarily a physician or imbued with sufficient knowledge and judgment to practice general medicine. The determination of a sound policy for society or of a sound policy for the treatment of disease, requires sound judgment of the relationships of the various fields of knowledge involved. There is an integration of the various fields which is necessary to this sound judgment. It is a case in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, the divisions requiring the qualitative and quantitative modifications due to necessary correlation. It is training in the ability to make this integration which, it seems to me, is lacking in the educational methods or practice of those who teach the humanities in the hope that they will turn out generally educated men and women of sound judgment. It is this failure which has resulted, in medicine, in the loss to the profession of the so-called general practitioner. It may be that in medical practice this loss is inevitable. But it can not be that we can put up with the loss of a group of men in our society who have a general all-round view of social policies so that we can rely on them for advice in matters of public importance. Our colleges of liberal arts and sciences have become training houses for specialists in teaching and research in the different departments. But should they not, in the public interest, restore their traditional role, however imperfectly they fulfilled it, of turning out the all-round, generally educated, citizen?

Men and women educated in a program of studies whose aim is efficiency are capable of giving valuable advice as to procedure in matters of public policy after the policy has been established. They are not ordinarily good advisers in determining what is a wise policy. Their horizon is too limited. Illustrations in recent public life in America lie ready to hand. Our system of taxation adopted in the late war was, in considerable measure, based on the advice of so-called specialists in finance. Learned in economic principles they knew little about practical politics, con-

ditions which would limit the application of the economic principles, or the probable practical effects of proposals which had an economic justification only. We get a very different tax policy, and perhaps a different tax administration, according as the tax system which is embodied in law is based upon the economic theory of taxation alone, or the so-called sociological theories, or the facile administration theory. A system of taxation theoretically perfect from the point of view of raising the largest revenue may fit the temper of one nation and raise a rebellion in another. The theorist in this field is constantly forgetting Macaulay's (or was it Macaulay?) remark about the loss of the American Colonies by Great Britain. Our Indian subjects submit without protest, he said in substance, to the imposition of taxes on various necessities of life. We imposed a tax on tea—a tax so light as scarcely to be felt—on the fierce breed of the old Puritans and we lost an empire.

A similar conflict of procedure and policy and therefore lack of great leadership, is seen in recent educational movements. From the point of view of the interests of education alone, there are few of us who would find objection to most of the propositions for federal aid that have recently been put before the country. There are some of us who think that some of the methods proposed are subversive of the fundamental political principles on which our government rests. Shall we sacrifice the latter for the former?

We cannot expect wise advice on any large matter of public policy from one who looks at it merely from the class point of view, or the financial point of view, or the humanitarian point of view. Sound advice can come only from those whose education and experience enable them to realize the consequences of action based upon each single line of influence, to judge of the relative importance of the results of each single line of influence, and to suggest an adjustment that will harmonize these different results in a way to give the largest promise. That is statesmanship. It is statesmanship that is so greatly lacking in the leaders of American public opinion today. Here, it seems to me, lies a place for reform in our colleges of arts and sciences. They need to integrate again the subjects that constitute the field of the humanities; to give, from this integrated group, that harmonious education that will furnish the necessary knowledge, and the basis for sound judgment, of the man of general education.

It is not within the purpose of my present discussion to inquire into all the causes of the change in our educational aim in

the teaching of humanistic studies. But there is one not yet mentioned which I think worth a moment's attention. It is the influence of German training in some subjects on American students. We owe a great deal to the German universities for what they did for American students of two generations ago. It was from these universities, through the students, that we got the impulse towards research and the development of higher education. However, I have always felt that their influence in the field of the science of society—economics, political science, sociology—was more harmful than beneficial. American students studied these subjects in Germany and came back to teach what they had learned without realizing that what they had learned in the German universities rested upon a fundamental political philosophy entirely different from, and not applicable to, a people and a government like our own. They had the German point of view of the relation of the state to the individual, even if they did not realize this. The German system of education met the Aristotelian test of intimate correspondence with their form of government. But our form of government was different and the same system of education could not have intimate correspondence with it. One result has been attempts to introduce into various fields of American life public policies based on the German theories. This, in my opinion, is one of the principal causes of the confusion as to what is proper public policy on many questions before the American people today. We need leaders of public influence who will use their influence to preserve a "federal constitutional democracy." We cannot get them from teachers whose political, economic, and social theories are founded on a philosophy that has no "intimate correspondence" with a federal and constitutional democracy.

There are certain results of less importance that flow from the condition of our university educational programs in the colleges of liberal arts. The piecemeal presentation of the subjects fails to give students any broad view of their field. It makes more likely, conflicting authoritative statements in the classroom which are confusing to students and leaves them to question, either the judgment, or knowledge, or accuracy of statement, of their instructors who differ with one another. Finally, I believe it is a considerable cause of the absence from our faculties of men who have either the knowledge or the ability to correlate their particular subjects of instruction with collateral or allied subjects. One consequence of this condition is that students taking up a new course of study, like, let us say, public finance, have little

notion of why they should study it and of its relation to the other courses that they have taken or are taking. Therefore, they too often lose interest in the subject, or what is worse, lose faith in their instructors.

The criticism that we are not producing even in vocational and professional lines men who have a grasp of their fields as a whole appears to have also some foundation. There is not time to discuss this criticism, but it may be the foundation of the call, now faintly heard, but likely to become louder, for the restoration of curricula in engineering and other fields "considered as a whole."

Another unfortunate, but academic, result of the subdivision of the fields of the humanities and intense specialization in them, is that specialization sometimes has reached too far into the lower classes and, therefore, has not been based upon a general knowledge of the field. I submit with due reserve that crime, charity, and abnormal psychology, for example, are not proper subjects for study in sophomore year. Still another evil result has been the isolation of the departments. The staffs of different departments have had little in common, and therefore have been of little assistance to one another in the way of inspiration and help in the conduct of their work.