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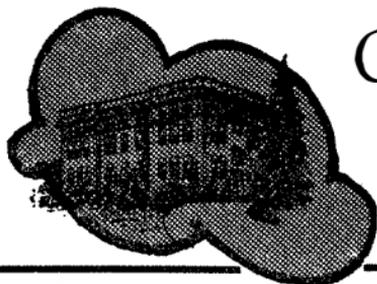
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"Therefore live all in the peaceable life, doing good to all men and seeking the good and welfare of all men."

Journal, George Fox, 1659

Creativity, A Needed Dimension To Liberal Arts

BY DONALD MCNICHOLS, DEAN

No question can be of greater concern to the small, liberal arts college than the question of how to train students for becoming more effective citizens. The liberal arts curriculum can and should prepare students for greater creativity, rather than leave this responsibility to specialized schools. Such a contribution would eventuate in raising the individual to greater contributions to his community.

Because of the financial crisis which threatens the small, liberal arts colleges, each has become more articulate in an attempt to make its values known. As a response, together with financial aid, has come a sharp evaluation of their efficiency in concrete terms. This special scrutiny is causing and will continue to cause them to study their graduates to determine how best to attain greater effectiveness.

One is more of a realist than an alarmist in recognizing that these schools are apt to be more and more dependent upon corporate gifts for survival. As this situation develops, the merit and/or lack of merit will determine which colleges will continue to operate.

It would be foolhardy to pretend knowing an absolute program to guarantee effectiveness of a college. There is none as such, but there are guides which point to what is expected of these institutions. Addresses given by business leaders to college and university administrators nationally during the past two years point to the need for training youth in creative thinking. Yet upon examining the purposes of these private colleges, only rarely does one find thinking mentioned—creativity even more seldom. A statistical grouping of the self-appointed purposes gleaned from examining college catalogs with the frequency of each specific goal indicated lies outside of the present discussion, but it is relevant to observe that despite the diversity of objectives, there is a common grouping around an attempt to communicate an appreciation for man's cultural attainment. An appreciation of values and the mastery of the vehicle of thought also receive nearly unanimous consideration. Undoubtedly most of these schools have in some manner implied an interest in developing the student toward creative attainment, although such a vital part of leadership training will not be supplied without a conscious and well directed effort on the part of the college.

Precisely what is creativity in this sense? It is the fresh touch, the new arrangement, the new solution to the old perplexity; it is the new impress of a generation upon the pattern which it has received.

What inner springs of resource must the college touch through its curriculum to release creative activity? Undoubtedly this must emerge from two distinct sources: the mind and the spirit. Let us briefly examine the type of instruction which can wed these two agencies into a creative union.

Courses can be taught in such a manner that a student is called upon only to recite facts. In this situation the mind is to serve something of the function of a sponge, absorb, then pour out. Too much of the liberal arts has embraced this method. A new emphasis needs to be given by training youth to *work* with the facts given them. A calculator can check off the sum of the parts, but it requires the mind to grasp the "extra" that makes each situation unique and complete. Students can be led to creative thinking requiring them to form ideas from previous relationships and connect these ideas into

larger entities. This activity will lead to raising questions which will form the basis for new outlooks; such, in essence, is the contribution which the liberal arts is capable of making to the mental development of students in its care. Such training which will require the energetic application of each mind in the class becomes personal in the sense that each individual's inherent ability has an opportunity to find its particular and unique contribution. The thrust of each course can lead the student to his individual creative sphere.

The second area which must be touched has already been loosely referred to as the spirit, or that depth of being commonly known as the soul. The inner self or soul must always sail out beyond present accomplishment if one would be kept from shallowness. Creativity as has been described stems only from depth of being. From within these depths emerge the aspirations and ambitions which, when permitted to discipline the mind, provide the limitless possibilities residing within every man and woman.

Herein lies an important function of the arts: music, literature, art (which are found even in the smallest offerings); they should touch and challenge the imagination. This has been the message of the poets from the Homeric world to the present, but how seldom it can infiltrate into the classroom. Through the arts and perhaps best through them the developing student can be lifted outside of his customary world. Having learned thus to stand apart from the world of men and watch the conflict through the medium of the arts, the individual will be enabled to formulate new objective judgments. This will at least in small measure contribute to critical and original thinking—the foundation of creativity.

The contemporary scene provides ample evidence in support of this insistence that creativity is necessary. A relatively small number of liberal arts graduates will be occupying positions through which they will be formulating national and international policy and solving the problems on this high level. A few will contribute through the facets of art. The great percentage of these graduates will be Mr. and Mrs. America, the citizens who cast the deciding votes, the men and women who form our communities, lead the churches, direct the service clubs, and form the civic groups. These citi-

zens who attend college must be equipped to perform a superior leadership within community life. The hope for America lies in the creative leadership of those who can solve difficult and complex problems, and use their imagination to sift the competing values and choose those with ultimate outcomes rather than proffered immediate gratification.

If this small Quaker college can utilize its facilities and instruction to this end together with its other functions, this unique contribution will enable it to keep faith with its great circle of friends who share in its operation.

CALENDAR

Opening of 1954-55 School Year

- September 7- 9—Faculty Pre-School Conference,
Brightenbush Camp, Cascade
Mountains.
- 10—Dormitories open for Freshmen.
- 11—Beginning of Freshmen Orientation.
- 12—Special Church Service for Freshmen.
- 13—a.m., Freshmen Orientation Con-
tinues.
p.m., Registration of Freshmen.
- 14—Registration for Sophomores, Juniors
and Seniors.
8:00 p.m., Student Body Mixer.
- 15—8:00 a. m., Classes Convene.
6:45 p.m., First Student Christian
Union Prayer Meeting.
- 16—7:30 p.m., Coeds' Big and Little Sis-
ter Party; Mixer for Men.
- 17—8:00 p.m., Faculty Reception in Honor
of New Students.
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