The Professions, the Universities ...... and the Future

Review
by Dr. J. J. Oppenheimer

An elderly German professor in summing up the high points of a conference on universities and the professions said:

It is wonderful to think that nations, which seven years ago were still at war with each other, have come together here to discuss their common problems. If in 1945 somebody had asked me how long I thought it would be until that could happen, I would have answered: "One generation". That it can happen today is a victory of the mind and of the spirit. The academic attitude of mind has not been engulfed by a machine-conditioned age, but it is a living thing.

He expressed the thoughts in the minds of sixty representatives of four nations — France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States — assembled at a four-day conference in Koenigswinter near Bonn in March. The conference had been planned jointly by the higher education specialists of the Allied nations and a German university committee headed by Rector Werner Richter of Bonn University. The German committee prepared the program and invited participants, half of whom represented the professions and the other half the rectors and professors of professional schools in German institutions of higher education. The Allied countries furnished consultants who worked with the four professional groups: engineering, law, medicine and teaching.

The conference presented an unusual opportunity to compare the system and problems of professional education and to a more limited degree to see how national values influence the education of their professional leaders.

The German representatives were somewhat pessimistic, although eager to hear of the advances made in other countries, but confused as to what next steps were to be taken. They gave the feeling that the Nazi regime, war and restoration had taken a terrific toll and that great energy and many resources have to be expended to repair the damages. They reiterated the point that most of the professions were over-supplied and that in Germany there was real danger of creating a "white collar proletariat". The idea of academic freedom, namely that a student should have the opportunity to enter any profession of his choice has much to do with the oversupply of professional people. Added to this is the social prestige which is attached to the professions.

On the other hand, the French, most similar to their German neighbors, were confident that their system was taking care of French needs.

The British, in their careful and conservative way, pointed to their sound progress in professional education, were more experimental in their approach, were deeply concerned to give the student individual instructions, and were working intently to broaden the social class basis of the professions.

It is difficult for an American to understand the pressure of competition for a place in the professions that is due to the combinations of economic rewards and social status that are to be attained in few other occupations. Professional education in the United States was described as: the most un-European, heavily financed, conducive for young men and women to become socially mobile, possible for wider social groups admission to the professions, combination of the leadership of the best in

Dr. Hans Neuffer (standing), president of the Permanent Conference of German Physicians, leads discussion with members of medical group. (HICOG photos by Gassner)

Dr. Oppenheimer wrote this article before he returned to his professorship at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. He had been consultant for higher education, Division of Cultural Affairs, Office of Public Affairs.
the profession and the educators in the professional schools to work out better educational programs both in the professional schools and after graduation through refresher and post-graduate training; utilization of more realistic practical training and theoretical study, and most emphatical attempt to convey to the professional student his social responsibility as a citizen in his community, state and nation.

Yet, one came away from the meeting recognizing that all had many common problems. The leaders of the professions are asking for better general education, especially in civic responsibility for the professional man. How to make professional education fit the every day needs of the professional man without making it a "bag of tricks"; how to make it theoretical abstract and really scientific; how to build on principles without losing the student's interest; how to decrease lecturing and didactic teaching and to increase student participation especially in thinking and solving problems; how to develop professional attitudes and ethical values in the professional students were issues that all professional teachers face.

ALL REPRESENTATIVES, conscious of the tremendous increase of useful knowledge and the growing demands for more effective services, pointed out the needs for continuous education of the practitioner after he leaves the professional school. Better methods of examining of prospective professional people are a serious need. Evaluation of the effectiveness of professional training need to be taken out of the value of opinion. More objective evidence is to be desired.

Prof. Eduard Brenner, state secretary of Bavaria and representative of the German Federal Government, in an opening-session address, pointed out that the total enrollment of students in the 16 universities, six insti-

utes of technology and the 20 academies of various kinds in West Germany is approximately 110,000 which is only 2.2 percent of the respective age group of the total West German population. Of the West German students 18.6 percent are in technology, 15.6 percent in medicine, 15 percent in natural sciences, 12.9 percent in law, 12.2 percent in business administration and economics, 10 percent in the humanities and 7.8 percent in theology. Of the students 24 percent come from academic classes and of the students' fathers 30.4 percent are in the civil service. Working classes contribute as little as three percent of the students.

Professor Brenner declared professional training is unduly confined to the theoretical approach and is operated chiefly through lectures which are an insufficient means of preparing the student for his professional tasks. The greatest shortcoming of German higher education, however, does not lie in certain inadequacies of professional training but lies in the fact that higher education does not meet the non-professional needs of the present world. Professor Brenner made it clear that serious reforms have to be initiated soon in order to enable German higher education to fulfill its duties in the light of the acute problems.

TOP RANKING among these demands is the challenge of political education of students which should both furnish those facts, principles and values which are indispensable for an unbiased understanding of the vital issues of today and for the active participation in responsible citizenship. According to Professor Brenner this challenge cannot be satisfactorily met by a mere liberalization of higher education. Reduction of subject matter changes in examination requirements, concentration on the essentials and integration of disciplines must

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Participating in an informal discussion during the conference are (left to right): Mr. Josef Aengenendi of Bonn, Professor Bernard, dean of St. Thomas Hospital School; Dr. Hans Neuffer; Dr. Wilhelm Effing of Vinzenz Hospital, Cologne; Professor Heidegger of the Anatomical Institute, Basle, Switzerland.
be made. None of these measures constitutes the general education which is nothing if it is not political education.

The true general education is not a temporary effort to counteract the disintegration of disciplines in order to restore the long-lost unity of knowledge. It means political education which alone can provide able leaders of the future Germany and which will safeguard the maintenance and furtherance of democratic life in Germany. If German higher education representatives recognize what the time spells they will go to work right away.

Prof. Theodor Litt, professor of religion and education at Bonn University, who had set up the agenda for the meeting, requested the groups to concentrate on four questions: (1) What are the principles of selection and of admission, including problems of supply and demand? (2) Is professional training adequate and does it meet the demands required by the professions? (3) Ought the specialized professional education be complemented by a general education and can the university do the job? (4) Is there such a thing as professional ethics and, if not, should attempts be made to develop such values?

The main work of the conference was done in the four-group meetings, the highlight of each being here-with summarized.

Engineering

GREATER SIMILARITIES of problems were recognized in this group although the national group used different methods of dealing with them. In general the engineers felt that their professional schools were not getting the most all-around students.

How to attract abler and more personable students was a serious concern of the group. In the United States the engineering students as a group have ranked highest in the psychological tests. The British felt the need of recruiting abler students. Not many students are coming from the laboring classes, although some American evidence indicates some students are coming from the ranks of skilled workers.

The German, French and British exhibited some fear that recruiting promising youths from the laboring classes might deprive those classes of able leadership. They, therefore, are working to see that such youths return to their own social class. More engineers are needed in Britain and the United States.

France and the United Kingdom are subsidizing most of the students of engineering by scholarships. If the youths of the lower classes can secure the proper secondary education in these two countries, they have ample opportunities to enter professional schools than do the students of like economic status in Germany and the United States.

THE OPINION of all four national representatives was that the professional training of engineering students while it could be improved was basically sound. Engineering education was becoming better organized and based on broad scientific principles. It was losing much of its “trade school” character. All participants indicated a need in industry of about-tour from technically trained workers to every professional engineer. They did not indicate that such training was a responsibility of the engineering faculty.

That engineers needed broader general education was agreed to, but the methods varied. In the United States a fifth year to give room to a cumulative year of study of devoted to socio-humanistic studies is being widely adopted. The British rely on the tutorials and students clubs. The French on a year’s philosophic course during professional study.

Some German technical colleges notably the one in Berlin, have general-education programs. But the bulk of German opinion favored general education being derived from the professional course. The Germans, too, favor return to classical curriculum as a prerequisite to admission to engineering.

All members of the group favored the inclusion of the study of human relations. Broad civic education was also seen as a need. Most members felt that professional ethics could not be taught in formal courses, but must arise from the characters of those entering this field and from examples of those teaching students.

Law and Civil Service

IN GREAT BRITAIN law students are usually recruited from families of lawyers or judges. In France and Germany students come from the upper middle classes.
In the United States the social and economic basis is much broader. At least two years of general education is prerequisite for admission in to American law schools. Both France and Great Britain stress broad liberal education. In Germany students are admitted directly from the secondary schools. Examinations for admissions are very competitive in France and England.

Law teaching is more theoretical and didactic in France and Germany. The case method is used extensively in the United States. At Cambridge and Oxford tutorials play important roles. German law schools prepare students for the practice of law and for judgeships. Supplementary training is required: in France one to two years; in Germany three and one half.

While there is a surplus of lawyers in Germany, no country represented at the conference was suffering from scarcity of them. Many lawyers in France, Germany and the United States enter the civil service, but in Great Britain 70 percent of the civil servants come from special classical or liberal studies of the universities. France has three year schools to prepare students for the civil service. In the United States more candidates for civil service positions are coming from training courses given in departments of political service. Internships in all levels of government are increasing in the United States.

**Medicine**

The Group reported that 60 percent of the medical students come from the middle classes and about 25 percent of that number from families of physicians. Practically none comes from the lower classes. For the size of the country the United States has very few medical students — about 5,100 are graduating each year. Although Germany has numerous clauses for medical students relatively few are denied admission. As a result medical schools in Germany are very large; they range from 800 to 1,200 students. In the United States about one in fourteen well qualified students is admitted to medical schools. Competition for admission in France, England and the United States is severe.

In Germany and Switzerland medical education is very theoretical; little practical work is given to the medical student, except during vacations and after he has received a medical degree. On the other hand in France, Britain, and the United States students in their clinical years work in hospitals and are in constant touch with patients. The large amount of subject matter available requires careful selection of essential teaching materials.

Specialization, according to the committee, should be deferred until after the degree is granted. The Medical Group also believes that medical students should have much practical work before they are permitted to practice. The feeling was general that the numbers in German medical schools should be reduced.

In all continental medical education more careful check on the progress of the medical students by periodic examinations should be made. The Swiss system of marking was specially praised. France and Great Britain provided numerous scholarships for needy medical students — about 75 percent are helped. In the United States and in Germany no governmental scholarships are available.

**The Committee** emphasized the need of general education for future physicians. The committee felt that all prospective doctors should have a thorough course in anthropology to make them aware of the human being. In British education considerable stress is placed on the cultural values of dormitory life and student activities. In the United States at least three years of liberal arts training is required for admission to medical schools and in many of the larger medical schools graduation from college is required.

In regard to professional ethics the general feeling was that medical students should be carefully selected and only those who have deep sense of social responsibility should be selected regardless of their other qualifications. In the opinion of the group this respect for the individual and ethical principles governing the physician's conduct could not be taught in courses but have to grow out of the character of the medical students and examples set by his teachers in medical schools and in hospitals. It appears that in the United States more emphasis is placed on formal instruction in professional ethics than in the continental and British medical schools.

**Teaching**

The Committee discussing the problems of education of teachers found great similarities between the system of Great Britain and Germany. The French were well satisfied with their programs of teacher education, reporting that the teacher in France seemed to be more highly respected than in the other countries. The problem of the social status of the teacher, especially the elementary teacher, was a matter of deep concern to the British, the Germans and the Americans. In all four countries most teachers come from the middle classes — many from the agricultural classes, but better qualified teachers in respect to cultural interests and in personality traits are desired.

In contrast to American experience, in Europe many elementary school teachers are men. The lower salary for the elementary teachers in Germany is a matter of great concern. The salaries of the elementary teachers in the United States and Great Britain are increasing. There is a surplus of secondary teachers in all four countries. In the United States there is marked trend towards uniform salaries for both elementary and secondary teachers of equal training. In selection of candidates for teaching the committee thought that greater care should be exercised in choosing young men and women of promise and character.

One of the most progressive innovations reported was that of the establishment of teacher education institutes in Great Britain. These institutes are centered in universities and have three purposes: to supervise the teacher

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