

PATHFINDER

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What Price Education?

Difference of Opinion as to Whether Our Higher Education is Beneficial or Detrimental to Economic Solvency

THE summer recess offers an opportunity to speculate on the role played by education in this era of depression. There is sharply divided sentiment on this subject. One faction holds that a costly "overproduction of brains" has contributed to our plight, while the opposition reasons that any curtailment in educational expenditure would be "false economy" and that only from the best minds will come our economic salvation.

Among those who see waste in teaching Young America too much "fancy stuff" is Professor Thomas H. Briggs of Columbia University Teachers' College. Addressing a convention of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, he declared that a complete reorganization of our educational structure is necessary and recommended that the work be done by a national commission of picked educators who would be able to "purge the schools of unnecessary studies." He argues that the cost of such an undertaking would not amount to as much "as is now wasted in misdirected effort."

Former Secretary of War Baker admits that he has "sometimes been a bit discouraged as to what happens to the intellect of America after it leaves college" and particularly decries "the lack of intellectual leadership in these periods of stress and strain." At a recent Yale alumni luncheon he asked:

Why, in this period of bewilderment and doubt; why, when the nation is afraid, has there not come from the academically trained masses of America, men and women who know the courage which a knowledge of history and the experience of academic halls ought to produce; and why has there not been the great concurrence of intellectual leadership upon which the people could have safely relied?

"I do not quite know why it is," he commented. "Perhaps our parties and distinctions have had much to do with it. Perhaps the rewards that have been offered in the business of the world in modern times have swept aside too much of the intellect, and too much of the spirit bred in colleges and left them unfit for public service." He went on:

Out in the byways and hedges, in the humble places of America, in the hearts of men whose words are perhaps illiterate and tones halting, there are great virtues that have been bred in the hundred or more years of our national life, and all they need is the kind of leadership which comes from the academic tradition of a place like this.

Then, too, there has been considerable complaint of the tendency of our higher institutions of learning to breed atheists, agnostics, rationalists, internationalists and communists. "It is time we should break with all the nonsense in vogue today." Archbishop

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