

# Letters

## Teaching and Research: To Blend or Separate

Dickinson's criticisms of the idea of creating separate teaching and research facilities in the universities (Letters, 13 (Dec.) should not discourage those who have proposed this measure at Stony Brook (1 Nov., p. 545). His attempt to justify the status quo serves better to underscore the necessity for changing it. For example, his belief that "if any line of thought is so sterile or so settled that the teacher needs no active experience in current research, it probably need not be pursued in a university" is without logic. On the contrary, excellence in teaching requires that a teacher be able to keep up with a vast range of topics and to integrate the advancements in many areas of research into a meaningful whole. This is a talent possessed in varying degree by university professors whether they happen to be engaged primarily in teaching or research activities. The converse implication that good researchers are good teachers is equally untrue, however desirable it may be. But perhaps more importantly, Dickinson's fear that the highly desirable combination of teaching and research at the university will be lost or made impossible by the "separation" of the faculty is . . . unjustified. The blending of teaching and research in the university must be a feature of entire departments, indeed of the whole university, and not necessarily of individual faculty members, in order to become "the unique purpose and strength" of the university. . . . Separation of faculties into teachers and researchers might be at least a small improvement over the present system, provided that interdependence and cooperation between the two can be established and maintained.

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. . . It is unrealistic to lump together the teaching of undergraduate foundation courses which indeed are "so settled that the teacher needs no active experience in current research" and the instruction of advanced students who

are sophisticated, informed, and specialized and who do need contact with the individuals doing current research. Unless the research activity can be closely correlated with the course material in a natural way, the instructor's involvement in research will usually be detrimental to his teaching.

The myth is simply that a good research man is per se a good teacher at any level, for any course in his field. From Thomas Young on, it has been frequently and unfortunately demonstrated that men who have made notable advances in knowledge can be poor instructors.

Finally, it should be noted that most of the knowledge which a well-trained man must have has little if any connection with the intense specialization of current research activity—much of which may fail to stand the test of time. . . .

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I second Dickinson's comments . . . it is possible to combine teaching and research. Even in the most experimental sciences a large part of the thinking work cannot go on in the laboratory or field. The thinking part of science is fully as much a part of the apparatus of research as the empirical work, experimental, or natural observation . . . I have found it helpful for my total research and, ultimately, for my field research, to be able to organize courses so that all such research activity as model building, hypothesis construction, literature review, much data analysis, and typologizing can be done by a class with its instructor. Together they form a research team, even if it is at an elementary level of sophistication. There is no one so far out of it who, if he can understand the material at all, cannot contribute some new perspective, perception, idea, interpretation, or ask a new critical question. Furthermore, in teaching-through-research or research-through-teaching, I have found that one constantly spalls off ideas, new and old, which have grown out of one's work but which one will never have the time to develop. However, one student or another gets inspired by such an idea, develops it

and creates anew, often indirectly feeding back to one's own creative work.

The idea of separating teaching from research strikes me as intrinsically absurd. In my own experience, the interesting researchers have been the interesting teachers: I recall Dunn, Dobzhansky, Kroeber, F. Keller, Lobeck, and others. The dull teachers have been dull or negligible researchers; those I recall shall remain nameless.

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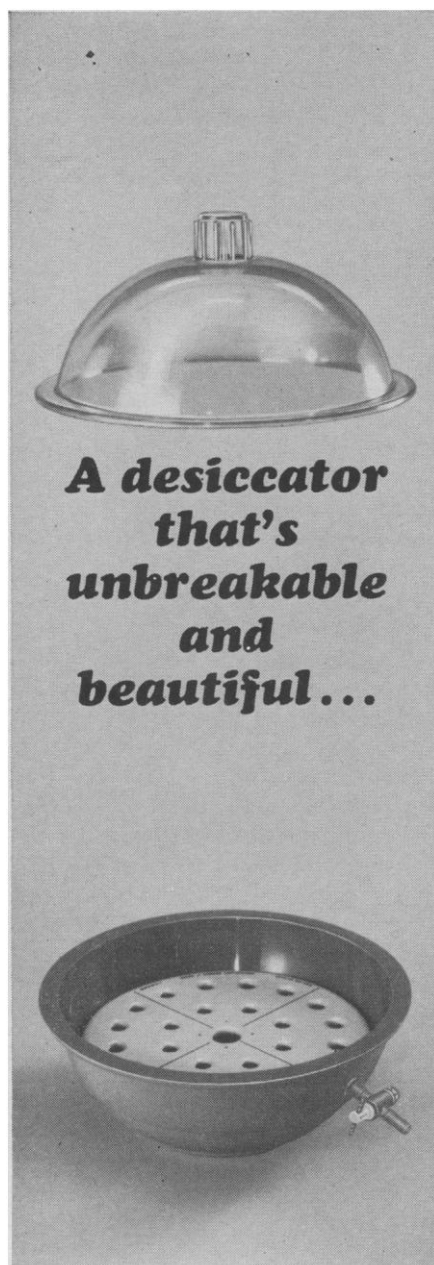
## Stanford Study of Campus Protests

Over the past few months, a number of letters have commented on the statement of a group of Fellows at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford (5 July, p. 20) calling for a national study of student protests. As one of the 19 Fellows who signed the statement, I believe some further clarification is in order, especially when our perceptions are seen as "constrained by creaking and rusting liberalism" (Letters, 6 Dec.).

Perhaps it is too obvious, but it is noteworthy that none of the comments referred to the fact that the statement was published in the first place. Obviously, such a national study might well have been initiated without the need for such a call. Certainly, many individual studies of student protest are now under way in many universities. Our intention in publishing the statement was precisely to be responsive to some of the concerns raised in these letters. Careful rereading of the statement will reveal that Whaley (Letters, 23 Aug.) and Liberman (Letters, 6 Dec.) are in error in assuming that we said either that study of protest be substituted for examining the underlying issues or that the problems of university governance are not of basic importance.

To the contrary, we suggested that an understanding of the process of confrontations could serve as an additional means for effective response to both the specific issues and the general need for reexamination of university governance. Begelman (Letters, 6 Dec.) has well stated what we hope may be the constructive use made of an understanding of these occurrences on campus.

With the repeated instances of intense confrontations on campuses this year, and with the emergence of similar modes of protest on high school cam-



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puses, it seems to me even more important than before that a comprehensive and careful examination of this entire phenomenon be initiated. Indeed, it is unfortunate that we don't now have more knowledge than noise, and more reason than rhetoric. When we reach that constructive stage, all liberalism—creaking, rusting, and otherwise—will be better served.

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### Lebensraum: A Correction

Dumey's remarks (Letters, 6 Dec.) on the 400-meter separation between people are correct. Unfortunately, one part of the text of my article was missing when given for publication. The paragraph in "Man's movement and his city" (18 Oct.), p. 331, col. 1, para. 1, line 8 should read, "The theoretical distance between any two persons on the earth's surface, if the whole population is spread evenly over the habitable land is 114 meters, over the whole land area is 210 meters, and over the whole surface of the earth is 400 meters."

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### Czech Christmas Greeting

At Christmas and New Year's we all send and receive seasons greetings more or less mechanically because it is traditional and we want to be polite. We glance at the cards we receive but rarely read the standard printed message. One which I *did* read this past season was the message of the members of the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and I was struck with admiration for their selection of a greeting to their friends this year. It was written 300 years ago by J. A. Comenius who declared that man's love for liberty "can by no means be driven out." Yet there were powers in 1968 who refused to accept that truth! The Czech greeting quoted Comenius as follows (1):

13 The more powerful people then betook themselves to another method of assuaging the strife of men: they sought by attacking whole nations and subduing and re-

ducing them to subjection, to establish whether in the state or in the realm of religion a single order or rule which should embrace them all; but always, as unvarying experience proves, rather with the effect of making things worse than with any good result. For there is inborn in human nature a love of liberty—for liberty man's mind is convinced that it was made—and this love can by no means be driven out: so that, wherever and by whatever means it feels that it is being hemmed in and impeded, it cannot but seek a way out and declare its own liberty. Inevitably resistance, opposition, rebellion follow whenever force becomes an element in the government of men.

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### Reference

1. J. A. Comenius, *The Way of Light* (Amsterdam, 1668).

### Progress in Metric Conversion

The concept that international conversion to the metric system is a worthy pursuit deserves support (Weber, Letters, 29 Nov.). The efforts of relevant U.S. agencies, including the National Bureau of Standards, to obtain conversion were discussed earlier by Wolfe in his editorial ("Adoption of the metric system," 9 July 1965, p. 139).

This research unit in the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene has found conversion to the metric system to be feasible and has been using it for at least 2 years. The Vincent Astor Diagnostic Service was recording height in centimeters and weight in kilograms as of July 1965, and as of September 1965, the New York Hospital, New York, was employing the metric system for weight, height, and temperature recording. A survey of public and private institutions in the fall of that year indicated that these units were converting from a mixture of pounds and inches to metric measurements of weight, height, and temperature of patients. What has been transpiring since then we do not know. Our own experience has been that the metric system is highly desirable for research. Finally, it is apparently not generally recognized that scales are available for measuring height in centimeters and weight in kilograms, and thermometers for measuring in the metric Celsius system.

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