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| | | | |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| <i>Shall They Survive?:</i> DR. E. V. COWDRY | 625 | <i>Media Containing Neisseria:</i> MAJOR HARRY A. FELDMAN | 640 |
| <i>Rainfall Periodicity in Relation to Malaria and Agriculture in the Near East:</i> DR. HELMUT DE TERRA | 629 | <i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:</i> | |
| <i>Obituary:</i> | | <i>A Microbiological and Fluorometric Test for Minute Amounts of Allouan:</i> SACHCHIDANANDA BANERJEE, KARL DITTMER and PROFESSOR VINCENT DU VIGNEAUD. <i>A Hanging Drop Method for Continuous Observation of the Activity of Organisms in Cyanide:</i> DR. WILBUR ROBBIE | 647 |
| <i>Merton B. Waite:</i> DR. A. F. WOODS. <i>Recent Deaths</i> | 632 | <i>Scientific Books:</i> | |
| <i>Scientific Events:</i> | | <i>Mineralogy:</i> PROFESSOR M. J. BUEGER. <i>Fresh-water Snails:</i> DR. HORACE B. BAKER. <i>Books Received</i> | 650 |
| <i>Plans of the General Electric Company for a New Research Laboratory; The Biometric Bulletin; The American Geophysical Union; The American Astronomical Society; Honorary Degrees Conferred by Columbia University</i> | 632 | <i>Science News</i> | 10 |
| <i>Scientific Notes and News</i> | 634 | | |
| <i>Discussion:</i> | | | |
| <i>World Standard and Unit for Penicillin:</i> SIR PERCIVAL HARTLEY. <i>Azimuthal Equidistant Map:</i> DR. H. HERBERT HOWE. <i>Botanical Work of the Cinchona Missions:</i> L. R. HOLDRIDGE. <i>Stars in American Men of Science:</i> RICHARD W. FOSTER. <i>Employment after the War:</i> DR. T. D. A. COCKRELL | 637 | | |
| <i>Special Articles:</i> | | | |
| <i>Production of Immunity to Dengue with Virus Modified by Propagation in Mice:</i> LIEUTENANT COLONEL A. B. SABIN and CAPTAIN R. W. SCHLESINGER. <i>Bacteriostatic and Bactericidal Properties of 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid:</i> DR. E. C. STEVENSON and DR. JOHN W. MITCHELL. <i>The Production of Carcinoma and Sarcoma and Transplanted Embryonic Tissues:</i> DR. HARRY S. N. GREENE. <i>Acetyl Choline and the Activation of Marine Eggs:</i> DR. BRADLEY T. SCHEER. <i>The Oxydase Reaction in Chick Embryos and Broth</i> | | | |

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SHALL THEY SURVIVE?

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ARE private colleges and universities in this country worth saving? If so, something effective must be done soon.

These institutions rely chiefly upon voluntary donations from private persons for their support. Some of these contributions, received in the early days, have been set aside as endowments from which they use the interest. But what amounts to a social revolution has taken place since the depression, with its epidemic of bank failures and many other misfortunes. Income on investments has fallen so that institutions now receive only about half as much from their endowments, and a new spirit is abroad throughout the land of letting Uncle Sam provide for everything with tax money. The idea of volun-

tarily giving has become almost a thing of the past, except to the American Red Cross and War Chests.

Yet in the past these private educational institutions have made great contributions to the wealth of the nation in the training of leaders in business, in the professions and in science and letters. In addition, they have helped to keep education free from regimentation and governmental control. This freedom in higher education is a priceless national asset. We have seen the consequences of its absence in Europe in the rising tide of totalitarian philosophy and practice. We take pride, also, in our great American public-supported institutions, which at present operate likewise in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. The continuance of their greatness

depends in no small measure upon their labor side by side with these private competitors, and healthy exchange of personnel and ideals between the two is for their common good.

Hence, it is clear that, in the interest of the public institutions and of the public generally, the private colleges and universities are worth saving. How imminent is their need for aid? How great is it? How can it be met? How can it be met without sacrifice of their freedom from governmental control?

The difficulty is that these great private educational institutions are highly individualistic and have never spoken with one voice on anything, the reason for which is not far to seek. It is because they differ so widely, like individuals, both in heredity and in environment. The great pioneers were firmly established chiefly in the Atlantic States by far-sighted, public-spirited citizens before tax-supported educational institutions took hold. These have much inherited wealth, and, backed by generation after generation of influential alumni, are complacent in their strength and unwilling to make common cause with their weaker and younger fellows. Size is, however, not a measure of excellence and survival may not depend entirely on performance.

Where little tax money goes to higher education the citizens, if they give any serious thought to the problem, will be more likely themselves to contribute freely. Concretely, the receipts by institutions of higher education per capita of total population from public sources (taxes) in Massachusetts in 1939-40 were less than in any other State of the Union, or only 64 cents. During the same year the private gifts per student enrolled in its colleges and universities amounted to \$47.72. The State of Connecticut was more generous on both counts, the receipts per capita from public funds were \$1.12, while private gifts of \$101.51 per student were considerably greater than in any other State.

In the West the reverse holds to the great disadvantage of private institutions. For example, in California, certainly not second to Massachusetts or Connecticut in the number of wealthy persons, the receipts per capita of total population from public sources were \$2.87, or more than four times that of Massachusetts and twice that of Connecticut, while the private gifts per student enrolled in this self-same year were only \$17.83, or about one third as much as in the Eastern States.

Thus, danger for private institutions lies in the fact that they must compete with publicly financed institutions in areas where the habit of private giving is lacking, as in California, and in numerous States in which but little private wealth is available. Some say: "Well, if they can't swim, let them sink," while

others are of the opinion that they should receive a helping hand.

In 1941-42 the public institutions of higher education received for current "educational and general purposes" \$251,820,909 of government funds (federal, state and local); whereas, the private institutions received only \$18,885,751 in government support. Any day now legislation may be enacted increasing the federal contribution to several hundred million dollars. The only question considered seems to be, How can state and municipal universities and colleges receive these large sums without federal control of education? No anxiety is expressed as to what this would do to private universities and colleges. Yet for the public institutions alone to be aided would accelerate the decline of the private ones.

In 1931-32 public institutions served 41.8 per cent. of the nation's students. Since then the number has steadily increased to 53.3 per cent. in 1939-40, the latest period for which figures are available. This shift of students from the private to the public institutions is likely to increase.

Marked inequality is evident in dependence on students' fees. The public institutions were able to operate in 1941-42 by deriving only 16.6 per cent. of their budgets from payments by students; whereas, private institutions were compelled to collect 49.6 per cent. from this source.

The higher fees charged students by the private institutions are unavoidable, though they have more permanent endowment than the public ones. In 1940, a year in which only 1,440 institutions reported on endowment to the U. S. Office of Education, private educational institutions had \$1,482,234,105 of endowment, as compared with \$204,048,662 for public institutions. But the interest from this endowment has steadily decreased from 5 per cent. or better, to about 3 per cent., and because of business uncertainty and high taxes, financial aid given voluntarily is shrinking. This decrease in interest from endowments hits the private institutions harder than it does the public ones, because they are more largely dependent on it.

There is another factor which bears down more heavily on the private institutions than on public ones. During the depression sizeable government grants were made to the latter for new buildings and equipment, but not to the former. Consequently, the private institutions must compete under the double handicap of less income and inferior physical plants.

In order to justify the higher fees from students the private institutions must somehow give more to them than the public institutions do. This means that they must offer teaching of higher quality. The impulse to survive is a great incentive to improvement.

Gallant efforts are being made, and these institutions are bearing their share in the war effort.

The main problem centers in the teaching staff. Let us consider the condition of teaching employment in general, irrespective of whether it is in private or public institutions, before discussing the special handicaps existing in the former. Testimony was given last year by Dr. Robert P. Ludlum, representing the American Association of University Professors, at hearings before a subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor of the U. S. Senate. This testimony related to the staffs of both public and private institutions and brought out the fact, well known to the sufferers and quickly forgotten by the public, that the salary increases enjoyed by some have been small and quite insufficient to compensate for the great increase in the cost of living, while others are still laboring under the handicap of salary cuts made during the depression. But the names of the institutions still operating in whole or in part at the depression salary level were gracefully omitted.

No consideration of the general problem of salary is complete without emphasis on employability. In academic circles most individuals past forty years of age continue with their work, but increases in salary come to them slowly or not at all. They may have reached the peak; but "peak" is not the word, for it signifies something high. The point is that they are usually not in demand by other institutions, because the policy is widespread to seek out young and promising candidates for important posts. Consequently, those who are past forty carry on, but salary increases are not necessary to retain their services. It is doubtful whether in any other walk of life advances in salary cease so soon. My friend, Courtney Werner, has aptly said that a university professor is one who spends half his life cultivating good tastes and the other half denying them.

Coming now to employment of staff in private institutions, a marked difference from public institutions is apparent. Instead of individual salaries being known, they are secrets not to be divulged on pain of dismissal. True, some of those at the top receive better salaries than are ordinarily paid in public institutions, but those in the middle and especially near the bottom are underpaid, and very little can be done about it. There is not enough money to go around. And there is the dreadful uncertainty of the survival of private institutions in the postwar epoch. Staff members have the jitters and deans are anxious but outwardly confident for their own particular faculties. Indeed, the greatest threat to private institutions is a massive exodus of staff members. The influences promoting this exodus are not hard to find.

M. H. Trytten, of the Office of Scientific Personnel of the National Research Council, has eloquently described the lure of expanding industry. Note, as he has, that this will come at a time when the universities and colleges are least able to supply the demand, because education has been curtailed. Add to this the probability that industry will be aided by Government, and that the high scale of living somehow will be maintained except for those in non-profit private institutions of higher education, who are the forgotten ones. President Conant, of Harvard, has urged industrial laboratories not to "kill the goose that lays the golden eggs." It is not only industry in the limited sense of this term that may deplete the private institutions of their staff members, but also the increasing attractiveness of extramural employment all along the line, since universities are universal in their services.

Consider the public educational institutions with which the private ones must compete. The University of California has come forward with a \$27,000,000 building program, and others will not be far behind. A federal appropriation of \$300,000,000 to the States for education is contemplated, a large share of which will go into buildings. Increase in demand for staff will follow construction of buildings as certainly as day follows night. Where are these thousands to come from?

In 1941-42, 1,067 private universities, colleges and professional schools reported 67,706 "full time equivalent" staff members, not counting those in the summer schools. Are these to melt away? What advice can we give them, as well as thousands of returning veterans now on leave from private institutions? Security is what they seek for themselves and their families, present and future. If they are young and expect to make several moves before they settle down, public institutions have no great advantage. If, however, they are nearing the critical age of forty, employment in a tax-supported institution is more attractive.

Whereas the shift of students from private to public institutions, already referred to, will be gradual but at an increasing tempo, the shift in staff may take place quickly, massively, like a land slide, aggravating the loss to industry, and then the quality of instruction will surely deteriorate so that excuse for survival of private institutions will evaporate.

The big question is, How can federal aid properly be extended to them? They do not want federal control, and Congress is rightly averse to extension of this control, especially in education. Legislation might be enacted to provide \$100,000,000 to salvage private higher education. But how much should be given and to which institutions? A mad scramble might ensue for federal money. Control by the Fed-

eral Government inevitably would follow the dollars. This would be a disadvantage, but beggars can't be choosers. The fortunate ones would soon be back for more.

An alternative would be to adopt the pound-per-pound plan which has been successful in the Union of South Africa or some modification of it, whereby the Federal Government would match dollar for dollar certain voluntary gifts to private institutions. Though this, unlike outright aid, would definitely encourage wealthy citizens to give at a time when the Government seems bent on their suppression, administrative difficulties would be legion. For a bureau in Washington to decide which gift to which institution should be matched and which should not would be an embarrassing task. It would bring a steady stream of supplicants to the nation's capital, generate much hard feeling, and Congressmen and Senators continually would be worried by the folks at home.

But there is a way by which financial aid can be extended without each institution having elaborately to present its case, without accompanying federal control and in such a form that it will stabilize financial structure of educational institutions and encourage them to help themselves.

If our elected representatives in Washington are agreed that private initiative in higher education must be preserved, they might well give serious consideration to a plan presented at a hearing of a Subcommittee on Health and Education (Senator Claude Pepper, *chairman*) last December.

This involves the issuance of a special series of 5 per cent. Government bonds, purchasable only by these non-profit institutions of higher education up to a certain fraction of their endowment, as recorded in the U. S. Office of Education. The bonds would be non-transferable and have a life of about 25 years. It is questionable how much each institution should be permitted to buy. To make this a fraction, say one half, of their endowments on record in the U. S. Office of Education would be simple; but it would give the greatest relief to those with the largest endowments.

An apparently fairer method would be to base the privilege of buying such bonds on the volume of educational service rendered during 1940, the last normal year in this country. A formula could easily be devised which would give an index purchase figure for each institution taking into consideration not only the total number of students enrolled but also the percentages of students who were part-time in summer or night school, full-time in regular courses and post-graduates. Since the educational service rendered per student in these and other categories is not the same under all conditions, it would be obviously unjusti-

fiable to allow two institutions having the same total enrolment to purchase equally unless their index purchase figures were the same.

Suppose that \$750,000,000 in federal securities were to be purchased, the Government paying 5 per cent. would be giving about 3 per cent. above the usual rate of say 2 per cent. It would, therefore, be granting without fear or favor an actual subsidy of \$22,500,000 per annum, or 3 per cent. of \$750,000,000. The amount is small in comparison with the issue at stake. In the event of a specified general and sustained rise in rate of interest on investments, the subsidy would no longer be needed and a provision in the bonds to cover this contingency might go into effect so that they would be retired by the Government.

It is easy to think of objections to this or any other plan of salvage and to use them as excuses for doing nothing. One objection is that it would help the strong as well as the weak, and some institutions which are perhaps not worthy. But private higher education is a great non-profit industry of value to the nation, which as a whole requires a transfusion without invidious distinction as to its parts.

Some persons have expressed doubt as to the legality of such legislation. To these I quote the following from an opinion kindly rendered by Mr. Elmer E. Hilpert, professor of constitutional law in Washington University, which reads in part as follows:

It is clear that the proposed scheme would not exceed the delegated powers of Congress. Congressional power to spend to promote the general welfare is not limited to the narrow range of purposes with respect to which Congress has power to regulate. Under its power to spend for the general welfare the federal government supports a variety of activities in fields in which it has no power to regulate. Among these is the Office of Education. Hence, the promotion of collegiate and university education is clearly within the analogies of federal expenditures that have been sustained.

Nor would the expenditure of federal tax receipts to pay the proposed "advantageous" interest rates violate the due process clause of the constitution. It is true that public money may not be diverted to private purposes within the meaning of the due process clause. But every aid to a private person or institution is for a purely private purpose. There are many instances where public aid to private institutions can be, and has been, sustained as sufficiently serving a great purpose to meet the test of the due process clause. It is hard to conceive of the Supreme Court's failing to recognize that public aid to private colleges and universities is closely related to the development of a trained personnel essential to a nation's welfare, both in peace and in war.

Neither does the proposed scheme constitute an establishment of religion in violation of the First Amendment, even if its benefits are extended to so-called sectarian institutions. Such governmental support would not

come within either the historical meaning of the term—establishment of religion—or within the reason for the constitutional rule prohibiting the establishment of religion. Realistically, sectarian colleges and universities (I exclude avowed theological seminaries) do not exist to perpetuate a religion but to provide secular education; and neither do they as a general rule restrict admission to members of the sect supporting such institution.

And the preference of colleges and universities as investors in the proposed bonds would not deny equal protection of the laws to those excluded from investing therein. Not every preference in legislation is a denial of equal protection of the laws. If classification is necessary to accomplish the purposes of the legislation and if the classification is reasonably related to the accomplishment of these purposes, then, assuming the validity of the legislative purpose and objective, the legislation will not fail merely because there is such preferential or differential treatment among the body of citizens. Here the very object of the legislation is to provide advantageous investments for private colleges and universities. Conceding that such aid to private institutions sufficiently serves a public purpose to meet the requirement of due process of law, the preference of such private institutions is a necessary device to effectuate the object of the legislation. Indeed, if the requirement of equal protection of the laws were to be given a doctrinaire interpretation, the legis-

lature would find itself in a constitutional straight-jacket, for the very purpose of much legislation is to single out some public need and provide the means to meet it.

The unkind may say that this is altogether too simple a solution devoid of attractive red tape. It would not result in the growth of a large bureau, applicants would not flock to Washington, and our elected representatives there would have no opportunity to display their prowess in the support of the schools and colleges at home. It would simply be the right of all private institutions of higher education listed in the U. S. Office of Education to avail themselves of this federal aid in proportion to the educational service they perform.

The idea of issuing a special series of 5 per cent. non-transferable Government bonds is mentioned because it seems to be workable. But any plan of federal aid unaccompanied by federal control would be welcome. The time for inaction is past. It is up to these great private schools and colleges from Maine to Florida and from Washington to California and in between to get together and tell the public what they really want, for legislation may be passed almost any day, which, by supporting only public institutions, will make their survival even more precarious.

RAINFALL PERIODICITY IN RELATION TO MALARIA AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

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THE literature on the Near East is full of speculative references to climatic changes as having altered the history of its peoples. Depopulation of Palestine and Syria in ancient times, shifting of caravan roads and cities, loss of soil fertility, wars between sedentary and nomadic peoples have at one time and another been related to rainfall and vegetation changes. In a most recent book by W. C. Lowdermilk¹ the problem is posed anew. In opposition to Ellsworth Huntington's² claim for climatic changes, its author suggests that soil erosion is chiefly responsible for the vanishing of wealth and power in the Near East. In other sources the evidence in favor of climatic controls frequently referred to vanishing forests, to shrinking croplands and to abandonment of elaborate water works. In the other camp are those who emphasize social factors as degeneration of farm practices, raids of desert nomads, excessive taxation and diseases like malaria. The issues have been under discussion for over two generations, but they are not merely aca-

demic. On the contrary, they have eminent practical value. If the planners in the Near and Middle East would know what to guard against and at what time adverse climatic factors might arise, it would mean the saving of many human lives and of large sums of money. Already vast projects of land reclamation are under way in Palestine. Others are scheduled and will be tried out in adjoining regions which stir afresh under the touch of reformist movements. Hence a clarification of the issues is as timely as it is desirable.

It seems to me that a new approach to this complex question can be found in analyzing observable climatic records and in relating these to one of the better-known scourges like malaria and crop failures. Rainfall of course is the most important climatic factor in these lands. Meteorologic recordings go back sufficiently in time to permit of definite conclusions as to the periodicity of rainfall and water supply. Long-range recordings are available from stations like Beirut, Haifa, Jerusalem, Gaza and others. A preliminary study of these records tends to disclose that a very real control has been exercised over the welfare

¹ "Palestine, Land of Promise." New York, 1944.

² "The Transformation of Palestine," Boston, 1911, and "Climatic Pulsations," Hyllningskrift Sven Hedin, Stockholm, 1935.