

FOCUS



Dean of Students Warren L. Clark checks out one of the many daily problems coming into his office.

The Dean of Students of Belmont Abbey College is a gentleman who comes well-prepared to work with young men. He is Warren L. "Chick" Clark, a retired Lt. Col. in the regular U. S. Army. A native of Flushing, N. Y., he has lived in many parts of this country and abroad. Youthful patriotism prompted him to enlist in the Army after high school. Upon completion of his tour of duty, he decided to continue his education. The Korean conflict interrupted his studies after only two years, and he volunteered again for service with the 82nd Airborne Division.

He attended Officers' Candidate School in 1952 and after receiving his commission as a 2nd. Lieutenant was sent to Korea. From there he was eventually transferred back to the U.S., and then to Japan, Germany, and finally, Vietnam, where he served as battalion commander. He was decorated with five Air Medals, two Bronze Stars and Legion of Merit award.

During these years he met and married Martha Smith of Charlotte, N. C. They now have five children and live in a new home which they built in N. Charlotte. Reflecting upon the years in service, Chick remarked that the military way of life has not been easy for his family: "We moved and traveled over a large part of Europe while most of my children were still very young. But traveling was a great experience for them. They learned to communicate with so many different kinds of people. It was an education in itself."

Teaching and counseling have always been his consuming interest. "Teaching I love," he says. He feels that all teachers have a definite need to become involved with students on the person - to - person level in higher education, this is more important today than perhaps at

any other time. After twenty-three years of active duty, Chick Clark has returned to his first love, education. He now holds an A. B. degree in psychology from Park College, Parkville, Mo. and an M. Ed. in guidance and counseling from Loyola University of New Orleans, where he served as chairman of the Military Science Department.

He acknowledges that the post of Dean of Students at Belmont Abbey College poses a real challenge to him. It is at once a demanding and a very rewarding job. The undergraduate of the 1970's is a different type of person from the student of the previous two decades. He demands more information, insists upon participation in decision - making, and is much more inclined to be articulate about his views and dissatisfactions than the students of earlier generations.

Dean Clark has earned the respect and esteem of the student body during the past year and a half. One of the students recently confirmed this by his candid comment: "The Dean's job is one helluva thing to have to do every day! But Dean Clark can hack it."

His personal philosophy of deanship is to be open to the students, to listen, to give them the assurance that their views are taken seriously, and at the same time, to try to elicit from them a mature sense of personal dignity and responsibility. "I feel," he says, "that my duty is to give guidance and direction in a fair but firm manner." His colleagues on the faculty are confident that Chick will "hack it" very successfully.

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Weak minds never yield when they ought.

Anonymous

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The Debasement Of Liberal Education

BY MORRIS B. ABRAM

Americans have a mania for higher education. Our college and university enrollment is almost eight million -- in terms of percentage of population, more than twice that of Russia, three times that of Japan, and about five or six times that of Britain, West Germany, and Switzerland.

This condition is not, in my view, an unmixed blessing. Perhaps no more telling indictment of it may be found than in the increasingly vociferous demand on American campuses for educational "relevance."

Most serious students of mathematics and the sciences are reasonably content with the curriculum in these fields in a good university. On the other hand, literally thousands of students of the social sciences and humanities are not; they find the traditional subject matter of these disciplines unrelated - irrelevant - to their lives.

The dissatisfaction which gives rise to their cry for a more relevant education does, I think, have something to do with the curriculum. But much of the real problem, and the answers, lies elsewhere.

Higher liberal education has, I believe, one primary and proper function: to teach those students who have the capacity and desire to learn from books how to learn. An education which accomplishes this in the student equipped for and desiring it is, I submit, always and thoroughly relevant. It provides the so - educated man or woman with the skills to make the learning relevant.

For example: At the outbreak of World War II, Oliver Franks, later ambassador to the United States, was a tutor of moral philosophy at Queens College, Oxford. He was called from that post to become Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Supply -- the head of the British war production industries.

What qualified him for the position was not any special training; it was, rather, having the mind, character, and ability to learn -- in this case, something as far afield from moral philosophy as the management of British industry.

A Sense Of Thorough Mastery

The classical education performed admirably the task of teaching students how to learn. The curriculum they were exposed to had been carefully dissected and had a vast

literature, and they were compelled to learn it. Those who finished it were left with a sense of the mastery of something inherently important and difficult, and with the tools and discipline to proceed to other fields on their own.

I am not so naive as to believe that any significant numbers of American students are prepared for or could be enticed into a classical education; the numbers in England, too, are diminishing. Nor do I believe that the classics are the sole route to a liberal education. History, English, politics, French, philosophy - almost any of the great departmental headings defines an area a student might pursue instead. If he acquires a thorough knowledge of it, he will possess the ability to dig deeply into other subjects.

This thorough knowledge, however, is precisely what liberal arts education is failing to provide in so many places today. A liberal arts degree in the better colleges can be gained by a little bit of English, mixed with less French, a smattering of politics, a whiff of philosophy, a dash of history, and a sprinkling of, say, biology. These subjects, while very difficult if pursued to their innermost parts, are all relatively easy at the introductory level, and often the student is not required to go much beyond this level.

The average liberal arts student thus emerges from college knowing a smattering of a lot and deeply of nothing. He is master of no subject and without the experience and too old for further learning on his own. The failure of such an education is recorded not only in the boredom of students, the restlessness of faculties, and the intellectual vacuity of its certified graduates; it is reflected as well in student demands for curricular relevance.

Diagnosing The Trouble

In fairness to the students who set forth these demands, let's admit that they are suffering from something real. They are in the main, however, unqualified to diagnose the trouble; surely they are unable to pinpoint the place to blame.

They know that their studies are frequently unchallenging, and they plainly state that their degrees are educationally meaningless. They think the trouble lies with having to learn ancient truths - and these from books - and they hold the administrations responsible for

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