

## What Should The College Do?

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In times of crisis such as now exist in the world, men and women are brought to examine more closely the ideals by which they live, to slough off the complacent acceptance of things as they are, to seek within themselves and their past actions the causes of a catastrophe which they hope to avoid in the future. To no group is such self-examination more important than to the college teachers of America, who strongly influence at a most impressionable time of life the youth who are to be the mature citizenry of the most powerful single nation on earth. Such a responsibility, indirect though it may seem, is not to be lightly dismissed, and its increasing importance may be easily shown from the rising enrollment figures in American colleges during the past generation. It is easy for us as teachers to forget the dignity of our high calling, to judge its value by the somewhat meager financial and social recognition often accorded it, but a moment's consideration should assure us that those who guide the minds and help to form the characters of a nation's youth have much to do with determining that nation's destiny.

It is particularly appropriate that the faculties of liberal arts colleges should concern themselves with the aims and accomplishments of education, since within our system of instruction the college is the most advanced unit that concerns itself with general education, or education taken as a whole. Beyond it are various professional schools and specialized departmental programs involving intensive study within a limited range, but the college affords the last chance to give students a well-rounded training, to impart a comprehensive view of life and the ability to meet its problems. It is highly important that college teachers should never lose sight of this general and inclusive function, as their own interest in special fields of knowledge may sometimes tempt them to do.

In just this connection, however, the college today faces one of its gravest problems. Formerly, the traditional subjects of the liberal arts curriculum were almost the only materials actually taught to students through classroom instruction. Even such subjects as medicine and law were sometimes studied under private practitioners rather than in academic institutions; the apprentice system was the regular way of preparing for a specific trade or profession. How widely this system has been replaced by organized instruction may be seen from the bare reference to such professional schools as Engineering, Education, and Business, to the wide variety of practical courses offered in Agriculture and Home Economics, to the instruction in such manual skills as barbering, typing, and mechanical repair work. The systematizing of knowledge and techniques in these and similar fields has made it possible to master them more quickly by class instruction. And therein lies the college's problem.