

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

Ohio State Engineer

Title: Our Two Cents' Worth

Issue Date: 1945-04

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 28, no. 5 (April, 1945), 7, 36.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/36150>

OUR TWO CENTS' WORTH

All knowledge may be thought of as assuming the shape of a triangle, one apex of which is composed of the natural and physical sciences, another of the social sciences, and the third of the humanities. The natural and physical sciences deal with man's environment; the social sciences deal with man's relations with other men; the humanities deal with man. Thus from the very start, we can see that if we are to have knowledge and truth, we cannot ignore any one of these apexes. There are no sharp boundaries dividing each branch.

Now, the engineer cannot isolate himself from this triangle idea of knowledge, much as he might like. He must live on this same planet along with some billions of other people, most of whom are vitally affected by what he does. The engineer cannot deny that his formal education has been woefully negligent in the humanities. Three quarters of English are all the "humanities" the engineer gets in his four-year curriculum unless he manages to take an overload of studies to obtain them by electives. Or he may decide to graduate in five years instead of the four years. We have yet to see one of the latter species who is so devoted to the humanities that he declines to graduate in four years.

The College of Engineering here at Ohio State has taken steps to remedy the situation by adopting a full five-year curriculum for all branches. There are so many pros and cons (you can hear especially the latter) that we will not go into the enumeration of that vast host of ideas. We shall merely state what we have thought all along, that it is a good idea, fundamentally. There seems to be no general schedule made up yet, but the one certain thing is that starting with the Autumn of 1945, every incoming class will operate on the five-year basis.

The only kick that might be forthcoming concerns the advisability of initiating the five-year program *now*. As we understand the situation, anyone who has already had some schooling under the old four-year system in the College, and then had to leave school for service in the

armed forces, may complete his regular four-year curriculum and graduate, if he chooses to return after his discharge. However, think of those boys who went into service immediately after high school graduation, and those, incidentally, who never did get to finish their high school work. A great number of those men will want to take advantage of the G. I. Bill that entitles them to go to college at government expense. How do they react to the prospect of a long term in college before they can get out and into the industrial world? If you have read Mr. Dumble's edition of the "Bookshelf" in the March issue of this magazine, you have discovered that an Army Air Force captain in India hopes that there will be a continuation of the accelerated course so that those whose education was interrupted may finish as quickly as possible. That is the sentiment of a great many, the vast majority, surely, of the G. I.'s yet to return. Think of the "age" part of it, if you will. The average marriage age is something like 25. The boy who left high school in 1943, say, is now about 20 years old. Most of them will be about 22 at the time of their return to civilian life if the wars end as soon as we dare to hope. Let us suppose that they begin the five-year course immediately. Is it too much to ask them to wait until they are 27 years old before they get out and get a taste of this life they have been yearning for?

Before we drop the subject of ages, let us think about one other thing. It appears certain that there will be a year of military training required of all young men the year after they graduate from high school. Heretofore, college graduation age has been around 22. In the future, a boy will not graduate until he is about 24 or 25. He may not like that.

One scientist has ventured to predict a ten-year void in technical development in the United States after this war is ended. He says that the wholesale drafting of young engineers and other scientists in this country will put the good ol' U. S. A. behind the eight-ball in the post-war

(Please turn to page 36)

OUR TWO CENTS' WORTH

(Continued from page 7)

free-for-all. He may be right, but we are not inclined to agree with him totally. Of course it was foolish to draft all of our young technical people, and there *will* be a "void" to some extent. Are we doing the right thing to start now a five-year program so that it will take longer than ever to build our technical strength up to the place it ought to be?

It would be the height of folly to say that we know all the answers. We don't. All we can do is to point out some glaring conflicts which are bound to take place. No doubt the faculty has considered all of these mentioned and a great many others, and has reached the conclusion that all are overshadowed by the one great need of the specialized curriculum. It would certainly be shocking if a habit of public unconcern for the humanities should become prevalent. Such has been the trend. Then, we might have a generation which would have no use for political freedom, because it had lost a care for and a discipline in those interests which constitute a free mind.—E. C. G.