

Newcomb: *One shortcoming of this report is the Panel's failure to include discussion of the role of the government...*



Left to right: Dr. Julian Jones, Dr. Mason Daly, Dr. Stanley J. Drazek, Dr. Henry A. Walker, Dr. Robert B. Reppa, UMUC.

only, the report is a bit obscure in parts, obscurity being a classic technique for concealing committee differences.

All in all the report communicates well and is a good benchmark, a worthy beginning.

### **Toward a New Conception of Subject Matter**

In this section the report called for discipline-based seminars and blue-ribbon committees to meet periodically to explore the teaching methodologies, social references and current academic understandings of the major disciplines. These suggestions are worthwhile but unnecessarily limited. They boil down to bringing the graduate programs nearer to reality by having panels of experts update the programs. Such recommendations do not really suggest any imaginative or innovative approaches to graduate study. Much more could have been said.

Graduate study has necessarily become very specialized but it has reached an unhealthy point now where a person has difficulty changing from one area to another or even appreciating another discipline. Flexibility could be enhanced through more interdisciplinary study although that is not to deny the need for highly specialized persons in certain areas.

Any new conceptions of subject matter must include some respect for general knowledge as well as specialized knowledge. As minors are dropped and replaced by ever more specialized studies, our society could profit from interdisciplinary approaches which burst the sterile cells of these narrow concentrations.

The Open University program of UMUC, conceived in the United Kingdom and now primarily an undergraduate endeavor, could have potential for new conceptions of subject matter at the graduate level. The program provides a continuing education experience leading towards a degree. The courses involve programmed learning and are interdisciplinary. They utilize instructions by film and tape at learning centers. The humanities course, for example, integrates literature, music, art, philosophy and history in a largely self-study package. The social science course brings together sociology, psychology, economics, geography and political science. Students study at home with opportunities to meet with a tutor and other students at the learning centers.

The Open University idea sketched above would be one approach to the Panel's recommended development of new conceptions of subject matter and arrangement. If it were extended to the graduate sphere one might see our scientists

reading Dante and our English professors studying Einstein to the benefit of both.

There is more responsiveness among universities now than in the past. But sometimes they go overboard in introducing new courses. They get caught up in a phase or a fad which causes them to lose track of reality. American universities have ridden great cycles of change and renewal in the past. The early universities were classical in terms of higher studies. Theology was a major element in the eighteenth century but has virtually disappeared. In the next century, the land-grant movement came and agriculture became a respectable subject for higher degrees. The technology degrees in America acquired respectability long before they did in some other parts of the world. Perhaps this document is asking us if we are ready for another wave of development in subject matter, yet warning us against faddism.

In most cases however, this will not be the problem since universities move with glacial speed. But circumspection is not necessarily to be despised because universities have an obligation to preserve what is good and should do a self-analysis before undertaking major change. The present report hopes to stimulate just such introspection.



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I think the report is beautiful in terms of getting people to think about what is going on in graduate education and what should happen in the future. Some sections are rather wordy but it might be wise if the entire faculty of the University could see and discuss the particular topics of Section IV.

### **Insuring Viable Futures**

As I see it, insuring viable futures for our students entails long-range planning by the University and the state in terms of what we are going

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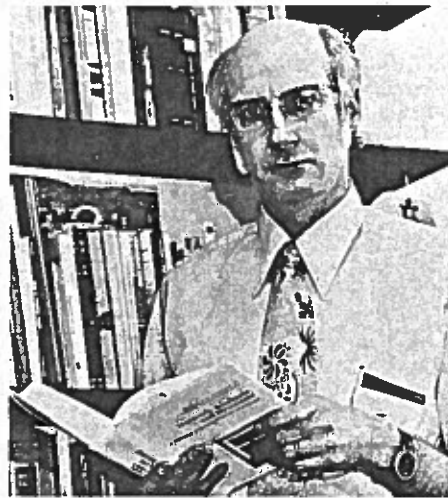
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to provide to the students so that when they finish their graduate work, they have a future in which they can be productive.

This ought to be done at both the government and university levels. Right now it's done at student, faculty, adviser levels. When we suggest topics for Ph.D. students, we often orient the students toward topics which will insure that their background is good enough to continue for long-range studies. But governments should put sufficient money into fields, topics, and individuals so that everyone involved will be productive and improve the society, not just spend money.

Two years ago the university was more "out of touch with social reality" than it is now. At least in the sciences there is more of a move to try to orient research problems for students and faculty toward society's problems rather than toward topics that just interest us esthetically. But this has been very haphazard. People will work where they can get funds. However, funding agencies can still fund esthetic topics and have them oriented toward problems of society.

For example, we have an interest in hearing aids. We feel the government could put funds into developing new methods of improving hearing for the aged or for deaf children. But right now they do not seem to have an overall program in this direction which allows for both abstract, theoretical and practical experimental research of the kinds suitable for universities. What I see for the future are governmental programs that are headed toward improving the biological atmosphere of humans which can involve



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engineering, mathematics, physics and so forth, and we can still find extremely abstract topics in those areas.

One shortcoming of this report is the Panel's failure to include discussion of the role of the government because unless implementation is done through government funding there is practically no way to get sufficient funds for permanent long-range planning groups to develop what is recommended.

The first recommendation calling for long-range planning groups to develop means of insuring successful institutional adaptation to environmental change is good but the government must be involved. The second recommendation calling for department chairmen to prepare periodic reports on all discipline-related information vital to effective long-range planning and the third recommendation suggesting inter-institutional discussion among the planning groups are good but I feel

the government must be involved, too. You have to have somebody at the top who is willing to push to get the department chairmen to prepare these reports and to get the various institutions together, otherwise these things won't be done.

The report states that the primary requisite for implementation is attitude change. I don't completely believe that. I believe a number of people, especially young people, have the right kind of attitude but there is no organization or structure to direct them. We need more of a direction, albeit flexible, within the society and toward betterment of society.

There are several ways this could be done. One is from the very bottom with the students and faculty. Another is at an intermediate step—the deans or presidents of universities. And another is at governmental levels. Let's say that the deans and presidents of several universities could among themselves decide that there are four or five areas in which research is appropriate at their institutions so that students will have a viable future. Then they can come to the faculty and students to identify the set of sub-problems the latter are presently interested in and to the government to identify the sub-problems the government would like to pursue. Meetings between state legislators, faculty members and students could isolate problems of mutual interest. Then funding must be found to support research in these areas, introduce new courses, and have fellowships for students. This I feel is the role of a good administration, be it department, university or government.

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