

differently in two different journals. When the controversial symbols occur in the middle of a word no harm is done. A state of affairs in which an author's name may occur under *c* in one index and *t* in another is, however, very confusing. Research workers who do not read Russian would find it well worth the small effort needed to learn the Russian alphabet and system of transliteration for, in physics at least, many of the technical terms can be recognized as soon as they are transliterated even without the use of a dictionary. Mathematics, tables of results, graphs, diagrams and photographs can therefore be recognized from the captions, which usually involve little grammatical construction. A technical English-Russian dictionary is available (by A. E. Chernukhin, State Theo. Tech. Pub. House, Moscow, 1934), but no Russian-English technical dictionary has been published. There is at present no technical Russian grammar. The writer wishes to thank the authorities named for help in collecting the above data, and would be grateful to receive additional information or corrections of errors for which he is alone responsible.

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## POST-WAR UNIVERSITY PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES

THE report of the president of Harvard to the Board of Overseers is always an important document. On this occasion<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps more so than usual, because Dr. J. B. Conant reviews the part that ought to be played by universities in the demobilization period, and he gives an account of the Harvard proposals. British universities have been facing similar problems, and no doubt much can be gained by a consideration of what universities in the United States are proposing to do. There will always, of course, be some differences that originate from differences of outlook and position.

During the past year, Harvard has evolved the general outline of its programme, and though designed for the period of large-scale demobilization, it is equally applicable to the earlier intervening period when the number of 'veterans' is not likely to be large. Two considerations directed the planning. The first was to provide several opportunities each year for returning soldiers to enter the university without having to wait for the commencement of the next academic year; and the second was to shorten the total time necessary to complete the educational rehabilitation. Both of these are worthy considerations, though they should be regarded as essentially post-war measures and not ones that would normally be desirable under peace-time conditions. In order to achieve these ends the College and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will have two terms of sixteen weeks and one of twelve, and a returning soldier will be able to enter at the beginning of any one term.

Dr. Conant remarks that there is little or no enthusiasm for such a programme as a permanent basis, but he does express the opinion that it is an improvement on the old pre-war 32-34-week two-term academic year.

Harvard's present 48-week academic year has produced signs of strain in the student body, and no doubt similar strains have been evident in student bodies of British universities, especially during the last four years. It would appear that Dr. Conant

considers that a 38-40 week academic year is about the most suitable, because instruction is not too long nor too intensive, and there is time for reading (especially since a reading period of two weeks prior to the examinations is probably included). This contrasts with the Oxford and Cambridge year of about 24 weeks, where instruction has perforce to be intensive and the student lives in a whirl from the moment he comes up to the time he goes down. In other universities in Britain the academic year is somewhat longer and the pressure is probably not so great. The length of the academic year would seem to be a problem that should have some reconsideration in the light of present-day conditions of living.

Turning to problems of admission, Dr. Conant rightly issues a warning lest academic formalities and institutional rigidity drive away men with ambition and imagination. This is probably one of the greatest post-war problems facing the universities, and it will require all the tact and understanding of those who are called upon to deal with the servicemen.

There are two other items in this report that merit attention. The first concerns the appointment to life positions on the various faculties. Naturally a university tries to secure the very best qualified men; but this is by no means easy as one may see from a study of the staff roll of any university. How far a proper solution has been found can be gauged by Dr. Conant's comment, "that nine times out of ten the normal forces working within any special segment of the University make for a good appointment, but against an excellent appointment. And it was President Lowell who said, 'the surest way to ruin a University faculty is to fill it with good men'". This is an important truth which universities would do well to bear in mind, and it may be that new systems for making permanent appointments need to be evolved.

The second item, which should be heartily endorsed in Britain, is a suggestion that not too long after the War a comprehensive picture should be placed before the American public of the part played by the respective universities in the war effort, "For such a picture would go far towards fortifying the faith of the nation in its institutions of advanced learning". Britain has really only begun to appreciate the value of the universities during the War, and a justification of their immediate enlarged monetary demands could perhaps be better appreciated by the general public if some similar picture of their war effort were to be presented. Beautifully illustrated brochures have been produced showing what the Navy, Army and Air Force have achieved during certain phases of the War. Could not a statement be issued showing the work of the universities? Here, however, a word of warning is necessary, and one cannot do better than conclude with Dr. Conant's own words: "if the story is told piecemeal and the approach is in a spirit of aggrandizement of a particular University and the claiming of a large measure of credit for this or that discovery or participation in this or that military operation, the public will soon sicken of the tale . . . the less glorification of the activities of the home front the better. What is said must be couched in terms of humility if it is to harmonize with the spirit of sacrifice and valour of those who bore the burden of actual combat".

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard College. Report of the President, 1943-44.