

## COMMENTS ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHING

The following significant comments on the Report of the Committee on College and University Teaching of the American Association of University Professors, were made by Professor J. Zenneck of Munich, and are here reprinted from the December, 1934, *Bulletin* of the A. A. U. P.

At the outset let me add my word of warning against the practice of officially inviting students to pass judgment on the merits of a professor. If anyone wishes to know whether a professor is a good teacher he can learn this by talking with colleagues and assistants, as well as with students, provided he takes the time and trouble to do this.

What I miss in the report is adequate reference to what we call "studying." In my opinion a large amount of student-training must be had from self-study. The student must, so far as possible, sit down at home each day and work out his problems, read books, and educate himself. The instructor who understands the psychology of inducing students to study—we are mainly concerned with advanced students—is, in my opinion, much more efficient than the instructor who merely lectures. It is my impression that in institutions of higher education not too much should be taught, but that there should be much studying done.

For undergraduates a teacher will perhaps suffice if he is a good instructor even though his scientific attainments be only moderate. For advanced students and for his influence upon them, on the other hand, it is necessary that the instructor shall possess the highest possible scientific qualifications. I know, of course, that there are professors who in spite of high academic qualifications are poor instructors, that is, they give poor lectures. But the training of students in scientific research by one who himself possesses a highly developed scientific technique must necessarily be good. When a teacher of eminence in any scientific field

gives poor lectures, I think the reason can be ascribed to a lack of lecturing ability in comparatively few cases; in the great number of instances it is due to poor preparation.

Occasionally the reason for this deficient preparation is that the instructor holds it beneath his dignity to teach. Sometimes, again, the reason is sheer indolence. On the other hand, I have encountered many cases in which instructors did not give lectures at the beginning of their teaching careers but through careful preparation and self-study developed into very successful instructors.

As preparation for a lecture it does not suffice to have mastered the subject of the lecture. One must carefully consider how the subject can be made clear to the student, and this contemplation should precede the lecture by a very short space of time. In elucidating difficult problems, moreover, one should be very careful in his choice of words, and in experimental physics should use similar care in selecting the graphs which are placed upon the blackboard. In order that these graphs may appear accurately on the board I usually set them down on plotted paper in my manuscript so that I shall have the dimensions correct.

To my way of thinking it is poor policy to write down and then read a lecture to a class of students. The virility of the lecture is lost thereby, and besides there is a temptation to leave the manuscript unchanged even though the original lecture is no longer up to date. It is better to carry into the classroom a detailed outline of the lecture and follow it.

For myself I do not think much of technical courses in Education, my reasons being, in general, those which are given in the Committee's Report. Experience has taught me that educationists who presume to teach others how to teach are usually poor teachers themselves; at any rate this situation is frequently encountered in Germany. The training of an instructor is first of all a



matter of self-education, not one of education at the hands of others. One need only watch a very good instructor in order to find out the direction in which he is himself deficient.

I hold it to be of importance that an instructor distinguish between headings and sub-headings in his lectures, and that these should be written on the black-board before the lecture begins. I know that this practice is looked upon as "pedagogical" in many colleges, but I also know that it is highly appreciated by good students. It is the best way of letting the student know exactly what the discourse is about.

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### LET'S START OVER

After an immense amount of trouble, the vicar of a country parish succeeded in reconciling two old women who had been quarreling for years. He even induced them to meet under the vicarage roof.

In his drawing-room they shook hands. After an embarrassed silence one of them said:

"Well, Mrs. Tyler, I wishes you all you wishes me."

"An' who's saying nasty things now?" snapped Mrs. Tyler.—*Pearson's Weekly (London)*.

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### NICE FELLOW

Sunday School Teacher: "Can you tell something about Good Friday, James?"

James: "Yes'm; he was the fellow that did the housework for Robinson Cruesoe."—*Pathfinder*.

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England is considering a law forbidding the use of motor-car horns altogether. Such a law in America would deprive a lot of motorists of their entire driving equipment.—*Kansas City Star*.

### ESSAY CONTESTS

The International Relations Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, with the co-operation of the World Federation of Education Associations, is sponsoring two essay contests for Good Will Day, May 18, 1935—one open to pupils in secondary schools, the other open to college and university undergraduates. The awards, donated by Mrs. Zelah Van Loan, of Babylon, New York, will be as follows:

Secondary School Contest—first prize, thirty-five dollars; second prize, ten dollars; third prize, five dollars.

College Contest—first prize, thirty-five dollars; second prize, fifteen dollars.

The subject selected for the secondary school contest is "United States: The Good Neighbor." The theme, intended to bring forth suggestions as to how the United States may be a good neighbor to other countries, may be developed from any angle, such as the control of munitions, tariffs, the foreign policy of the United States. Essays are to be approximately 500 words in length and must follow manuscript rules in form. The best essay from each high school must be sent to the state committee by March 15. The state chairman for Virginia is Miss Elizabeth W. Baker, State Teachers College, Fredericksburg. Final winners will be selected by a national committee.

"What Can America Contribute to World Peace?" is the topic chosen for the college contest. Manuscripts should be approximately 800 words and typewritten. They must be sent to the regional chairman, Professor C. T. Logan, Harrisonburg, Virginia, by March 15. The names of all winners will be given out on Good Will Day.

High school and college teachers are urged to co-operate in this enterprise designed to promote international understanding by encouraging their students to enter the contest.