

*Proceedings of Higher Commercial Education Convention*, held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, February 4 to 7, 1903. Publications of the Michigan Political Science Association, Vol. V, No. 2, June, 1903.

The Michigan Political Science Association is to be credited with the first attempt on any large scale to gather together university and business men for the discussion of problems that have arisen in connection with so-called "commercial education." The academic side was well represented by delegates from nearly all the institutions interested in this work, and prominent business men contributed to the discussions. That the three days' sessions were almost entirely lacking in tangible results is not so surprising or disappointing as it is suggestive. In the first place, persistent convention-goers are ready to admit that a formal program provides a dignified *raison d'être* for a gathering, but that the real benefit is to be gained through informal conference outside convention halls. We may well believe that this convention was no exception to the rule and that the informal give-and-take of business men and educators has aroused great interest, established a sympathetic relationship between business and education that will strengthen as time goes on, and has given rise to many practical working ideas.

But the inconclusiveness of the discussions is further suggestive of the multitude of unsettled problems confronting administrators of this new task. Admitting the desirability of this form of education which obviously such a convention presupposes, the question then is, at what place in the college or university course shall it be introduced? Shall it begin with a few subjects in the freshman year and continue in increasing amounts through the four years; shall it begin in the

junior year and be founded upon a two years' general culture course; or shall it be graduate in character? To what extent shall it supersede the so-called culture courses? Again, shall the commercial work be general in character, building a broad foundation upon which a man may in active life build his business experience, or shall it attempt a technical training for specific careers? To what extent shall the course confine itself to subjects purely commercial, that is, to the equipment of men for distributive industries, and to what extent shall it include training for manufacturing business? In other words, how much technical science and engineering shall be introduced? What methods shall be employed to impart instruction to students, and to what extent can the business community be relied upon to aid in this work? These in the main were the problems with which the convention had to deal, and it is no reflection upon the conferences to say that so far as the printed proceedings are an indication, the problems still exist.

It was evident that the business men present looked with concern upon any attempt to teach business details, urging rather a broad foundation in the social sciences, some even questioning the advisability of any modification of the general college course. It was further evident that very little aid in the shaping of a curriculum was to be gained from the business man through direct suggestion. It will be the task of the school to gather and organize material from observation of business life, aided by conferences with business men. The latter will judge of the value of the instruction from its product.

So far as the views of the university representatives were concerned, they reflected naturally, though possibly unconsciously, their individual environments. Each speaker was an earnest advocate of the plan which he was engaged in working out. And after all, the ultimate solution of the whole matter will be found, not in the framing of a cut-and-dried program to which all schools will subscribe, but rather in fashioning the course both in subject matter and method to meet local needs.

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