

THE GROWING ROLE FOR THE INDEPENDENT  
COLLEGE

The turning of a decade is traditionally accompanied by prideful glances over the shoulder to review the progress we have achieved during the past ten years. Nineteen seventy is no exception. We are all examining our actions and finding them good if they have contributed to "growth" and "progress." We of the West have been enamored with the idea of progress pretty much since the Protestant Reformation.

And progress in its perhaps too readily identifiable form, increased productivity, has been the measure of our accomplishment over the decades since the western world began to industrialize. Our production figures fairly leap from the charts after 1800. About that time, someone discovered that if ten men individually fabricating straight pins were to go about it in several specialized steps, that is, some of them drawing and cutting the wire, another fashioning a point on each, and several more flattening the heads, they could increase their output by fantastic proportions. This was the birth of the industrial revolution and its Siamese twin, specialization.

To this winning formula, Americans have added a few innovations of their own, both technical and political, and the result has been progress like never before seen. So it is that Atlanta papers can with great justification extol the growth of the Sixties, and say with equal justification that that decade was merely a prelude to the Seventies. The innovations of a dynamic enterprise system have produced similar results in every community in Georgia.

But this growth has also fostered an increasing specialization. A great many people know a great deal about pin heads and little of anything else. The coming of the technician has brought with it prophecy of the demise of the self-sufficient independent. Engineers, both technical and social, with an eye only on production, perennially announce that in America the independent man, like the independent college, is obsolete. Don't feel that you have been the exclusive recipient of this epitaph. As an independent Georgia banker, I have been told of the imminent passing of my institution for some years now. But much to the prophets' chagrin, independent institutions have proved amazingly adaptive and have in the past decade exhibited very satisfactory growth indeed.

Now, before congratulating ourselves on our survival, let us take one more look at our communities of specialists. We find that as the technician perfects and narrows his skill, he becomes increasingly dependent upon the technician next to him. This appears to apply to whole communities and nations as well. The production process becomes, in fact, so complexly interrelated that a single malfunction or misdirection can have widespread repercussions. The Twentieth Century, through specialization, produced the greatest output ever seen in the West, and then in the early 1930's, the failure of a single bank in Austria brought nearly the whole interdependent edifice to the ground.

It seems that specialization breeds an ever-growing need for that same independent it at first threatens with obsolescence. The more technical



the factory, the more it needs unspecialized men capable of coordinating its productive ability. In 1957, Ayn Rand, who is at best a mediocre philosopher and at worst an exceptional novelist, wrote a political romance called Atlas Shrugged. One day the independent coordinators walked out of the factories and governments; and on the next, the world they had supported fell from their shoulders. The book brought both enthusiastic praise and hearty condemnation, but it made its point. Political romances always have a disturbing degree of verisimilitude.

More and more our communities need individuals who can adapt to changing demands and customs, individuals not necessarily who can predict the future, but who are not caught unprepared for it, whatever it may prove to be--in short, the type of person the liberal arts college has strived to produce for many years. This growing demand for its product may well account for the private undergraduate college's refusal to bow to predictions of its extinction.

The increased need for their product has placed burdensome demands on Georgia's independent colleges. In facing similar challenges, American independents have traditionally taken federated action. Early in this century the majority of American independent banks, facing a series of crippling and unnecessary panics, formed into a meticulously designed Federal Bank created to reflect kaleidoscopically all shades of view in a constantly changing economy. In like manner, the independent colleges of Georgia federated in 1958 to form this Foundation. Each retains a

unique approach to a common goal--to give its students a sound acquaintance with the knowledge of the past and the present, and to lay a foundation that will make their education a lifelong process. One is quite struck by the emphasis found in the statement of purpose of each of our colleges on the preparation for the person's continuing development as he assumes his role in his community.

So, the colleges here represented have a great deal in common. They all have a liberal arts or preprofessional core curriculum which is constantly undergoing review and improvement, all are relatively old, having been established in the South's formative years, and all have sprung from and continue to serve the Church.

If I may, I would like to add a personal observation on this last aspect. It seems that only in church-oriented colleges do we find honor systems that really work. Unlike larger secular campuses, cheating on examinations is a rarity, term papers reflect the students' honest efforts, doors are rarely locked, administrations seldom find it necessary to enforce compliance with high behavioral standards. The student assimilates a high code of ethics, not from classroom instruction, but from the total environment in which he participates as a student. This unique contribution of Georgia's independent colleges appears to me to be of even greater significance than the intellectual discipline they instill. I find that in the final analysis, the stability and power of the American banking system and economy rest not so much on the gold in its vaults but upon the integrity of its loan officers and businessmen.

Well, we have seen that our Foundation's colleges have much in common. All maintain an emphasis on the student's future adaptability, his ethical conduct, the liberal arts. And all have a statement somewhere in the course catalogue to the effect that "Tuition and fees collected annually from students produce substantially less than the total money required for the operation of the college." Last year, for 8,000 students, that meant \$300,000 in additional funds.

The Foundation has its work cut out for it. The past decade has seen concerted efforts on the part of many individuals which have been instrumental in providing funds to our colleges. These, too, should be a prelude to the Seventies.

In closing, let me point out that my intention has not been to detract from the monumental task undertaken and being accomplished by Georgia's technologically-oriented universities. It has been to point out that as these efforts meet with increasing success, they place an even greater challenge before the independent colleges of Georgia.