

honestly propose to form a European union, they will have to call the French bluff; and the time is coming when the failure to call it will wreck for many years the possibility of European reconstruction. It is the peculiar advantage of conferences, such as the one now assembled at Genoa, that they expose, emphasize and advertise unpalatable but irrepressible aspects of an obscure and complicated political situation. They reveal the hollowness of the subterfuges which the politicians have used as a means of escape from their immediate difficulties and which so frequently crystallize into stubborn popular illusions. The New York Herald is right. "The Genoa Conference has justified its existence. Its justification is the awakening the world gets from the dramatically executed Russo-German Treaty. It flashes a picture on the sky which makes men think and shakes them from the lethargy of dull prejudice and easy-going indifference. It brings them to a realization that a very human handling of the problem with a broad wise consideration is the only course that will make for lasting peace and a readjusted revitalized Europe."

## Ferment in the Colleges

**A**CCORDING to the prevailing scheme in our institutions of higher learning the officially recognized interests of the students fall into two categories. The first of these consists of the "student activities," frequently designated in the college press simply as "activities." Athletics, class politics, debating and musical clubs, the conduct of the honor system, are typical "activities." The other category of interests has never, to our knowledge, been officially christened, but we suggest as most appropriate the name of "student passivities," or "passivities," for short. This category includes everything that has to do with the curriculum. How many years a student must spend in college, what courses shall be "required," and what they shall contain, how far election of courses shall be free and how far controlled by an advisor—all such concerns have by general consent been left to the governance of the Faculty. And the Faculty likes the arrangement. The Faculty stands in the position of a producer of utilities; the students are the consumers. And what do producers consider more fitting than that the consumer should leave to their discretion all questions of quantity, quality, and price?

Recently, however, there has appeared to be something like a ferment working in the colleges. At first only sporadic voices were heard challenging the eternal fitness of the division of interests

between activities and passivities. The challengers were usually avoided, as cranks, by the majority of well disciplined students. These students did not believe that you could change student nature. They believed that it was of the nature of the student to present himself as raw material at the college gates, to be milled and sifted and done up in a neat parchment package according to the technical rules laid down by wise men long since dead and administered by other wise men not dead yet. But the number of challengers has grown persistently. The New York University News has compiled an "Intercollegiate Platform," a sort of students' constitution, from "planks" composed by college editors in representative institutions. And while most of these planks pertain to the traditional "activities," four editors, representing Princeton, Yale, Boston and Amherst, turn their attention upon the curriculum. The Princeton representative asks for increased emphasis upon the humanities. The Yale representative would "preserve the college from the cultural blight which inevitably follows the growth of economics and similar studies." The representative of Boston asks for "curriculums more closely adapted to the practical needs of life"; the Amherst representative yearns for "a conscious effort to face the social, political and economic problems of reconstruction which our generation must solve."

These are stirrings, or perhaps better, growing pains. For a maturer performance we turn to Barnard College, where, under the opaque shadow of Columbia University, a really spirited student life is taking shape. A student curricular committee, created by the Student Council with the consent of the undergraduate body, has reviewed thoroughly the present curriculum and has presented to the Faculty a report which has, we believe, been laid on the table. But that is, we hope, not the end of the matter, as the report is too live to lie forever gathering dust.

What the curricular committee desires is a complete break with the traditional courses that make the Freshman and Sophomore years practically a continuation of the high school, and the substitution of broader studies that may serve to orient the student in the world of adult thought. The Freshman year, as the committee would reorganize it, would offer a solid course on the history of mankind "designed to bring out the chief aspects of man's relation to his environment by tracing present conditions and tendencies to historic processes"; it would offer a course giving an introduction to human biology and psychology; a course on general mathematical analysis; a course on English literature, "presenting literature as an aspect of life"; and a course on the technique of expression,

in which the students, meeting the instructor in small groups, would develop technique in writing.

We have not the space to reproduce the detailed specifications offered for the Freshman courses, nor to follow the curricular committee through the succeeding years of college. But we submit that even the bare titles of the Freshman courses are sufficient to show the boldness of the curricular committee's conception. It is bold, but there is no recklessness in it. A Freshman year thus occupied ought to prepare a student, as the conventional Freshman year does not, to utilize the resources of the college in the later years of his course.

The college curriculum was not made in a day, nor will it be revolutionized in a day. In every forward movement the majority of the Faculty will hold back, and that is well. The college, with all its defects, is a good thing in itself, and it is proper that the burden of proof should be upon the advocate of change. It is proper, too, that the advocates of change who receive the most respectful hearing should be those who emerge in the student body. The members of the Faculty have vested interests in changelessness or in change, in harmony or in discord. The only vested interest of the student is in life, and in rational preparation for life. The students are weaker than their instructors in point of technical knowledge, but their interests lie nearer the heart of the institution. And in ordinary life pertinence of interests goes far toward making amends for lack of experience. That holds of college life as well.

## Tariff and Depression

**A**CCORDING to Senator Capper's arithmetic we are losing three million dollars by every day's delay in enacting the tariff law. We lose one million dollars in revenue and our industry loses two millions in money return. That is at first sight a horrifying sum of losses in these hard times. But let us wait a moment before crying out. When money is lost somebody usually finds it. What becomes of these three millions? It remains in the pockets of the consumers, who do not need to pay it, in the shape of higher prices, to the government and to the beneficiaries of protection. Senator Capper's arithmetic, then, seems to leave us just where we were before. We shall have to look at the tariff question from some other angle if we desire a glimpse of the realities.

The central economic problem of the day is the depression which has afflicted us for a twelve

month and which shows no sign of dissipating in the near future. If the tariff can relieve the depression, there is a strong case for immediate action on it. But are we sure that the proposed tariff will not make matters worse? The born protectionist, of course, has no doubt on this point. Depression always attends low tariffs, he asserts. But reasonable men will inquire first of all what conditions underlie a given depression, and how far those conditions can be affected by any proposed remedy.

In the case of the present depression, there cannot be room for important differences of opinion as to the underlying conditions. The depression began with agriculture. The purchasing power of agriculture declined in one year by practically one-third. And every industry dependent upon the farmers for its market was correspondingly embarrassed. Directly or indirectly, all industries are dependent upon the farmer's trade; accordingly a general depression was inevitable. Does Senator Capper or any other member of the agricultural bloc offer an alternative explanation of the depression? We doubt that.

What was it that cut one-third off the purchasing power of the farmers? Not drouth nor insect pests nor any other force affecting the physical production of agriculture. The farmer's product was not essentially inferior to that of prosperous years. No; the farmer was plunged into a condition approaching bankruptcy by the collapse of prices. And there is no secret about the cause that produced the collapse in prices. It was the failure of our European customers to buy wheat and meat and cotton as liberally as their absolute needs would have dictated, if they could have found the means of payment.

What is the prospect of a swift recovery from depression? There can be no recovery until agriculture again enjoys satisfactory prices, and agriculture will not enjoy such prices until our European customers can find means of paying for American foodstuffs and raw materials. Whence will they find the means? They have no gold. Their credit is grievously impaired. Their only practicable resource lies in their exports; exports to America, or to other countries that are sending exports to America and thus have bills with which purchases in America can be made.

This is the simple economics of the question. We cannot fully recover from depression without a stimulus to our agricultural exports. There are no resources with which to pay for such exports except imports. Yet Senator Capper and his colleagues of the agricultural bloc are demanding the erection of formidable obstacles against the import trade.