

as enunciated by presidents and deans. He rejects the older view that a liberal education must be centered upon classical languages and questions the nineteenth-century view, still held by many academic specialists, that it must be defined strictly in terms of a limited number of academic disciplines. He prefers the broader and truly classic view that a liberal education is that which frees a man from narrow provincialism, pushes back his frontiers, and broadens his horizons. The academic disciplines are to be taught as means toward this broader end. McEwen concedes that the growing mass of knowledge requires adaptations and shifts of emphasis but the goal itself does not change.

IN a beautifully constructed essay, Professor Blanchard of Yale defines education in Aristotelian terms: the aim of education is to produce reasonable men. A reasonable man is one who possesses certain habits of mind: skepticism, reflectiveness, and impersonality. He asks "why?" he is not confined to the immediate, and he can control his passion in the interest of truth. "It is this independent, authentic, impersonal vision that is the true mark of the educated mind." Blanchard admits that these traits have no necessary connection with degrees and that they are totally lacking in some persons with many diplomas.

Professor Commager of Amherst would probably agree with these aims but he is more concerned than the others with the need for action, and has some recommendations to make: We must cease seducing students with false standards of social and athletic success; we must place less emphasis on teaching and more on learning; we can assure a better final product by the use of comprehensive final examinations; we can dispense with a good deal of administrative overhead. In a historian's account of the history of the university in the Western world, Commager points out that the great tradition of the university is urban and says that ". . . the urban university should abandon its sense of inferiority . . . in relation to its country cousins; cease sighing after green lawns and ivy-clad residence halls, and proudly avow its urban character and its urban potentialities." This proposal deserves further exploration.

If the purpose of a book is to make the reader think deeply about important problems, these are both important books. If the aim is to bring about a change in the existing order, Commager's chapter in "Education in a Free Society" is the one most likely to achieve its purpose.

Crusade against Complacency



James A. Wechsler—"alarmed at absence of passion . . . the want of conviction."

"Reflections of an Angry Middle-Aged Editor," by James A. Wechsler (Random House, 245 pp. \$3.95), scores the blandness of modern politics, the lack of the fervor that shook the nation in the Thirties. Columbia University History Professor William E. Leuchtenburg is the author of "The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932."

By William E. Leuchtenburg

JAMES WECHSLER, editor of the *New York Post*, has written an angry broadside about the complacency of our times. He is alarmed by the absence of passion in political discussion, the want of conviction in political leaders, and the deliberate blurring of crucial issues. He warns that a new political type has emerged: "the adaptable man, unfettered by strong feeling and conviction and blessed with a flexible TV personality." Even the young liberal reformers seem to be careerists with an eye on the main chance rather than devoted idealists.

The politics of 1960, Wechsler writes, are the politics of "middle-of-the-roadism, a euphemism for going nowhere

at a measured pace." Save for Hubert Humphrey, and perhaps Adlai Stevenson, each of the nation's leading political figures has demonstrated a failure of character, Wechsler argues. Eisenhower, who has drugged the country into insensibility, acted in a "craven" fashion toward McCarthy and displayed "moral cowardice" on civil rights. Lyndon Johnson characteristically confronts the most critical problems facing the country "without fear or fervor." Stuart Symington has maneuvered to vote with the liberals without antagonizing the conservatives, "which is another way of saying that he has somehow managed to communicate the impression that he doesn't feel very strongly about anything." Senator Kennedy was able to write a book called "Profiles in Courage" while ignoring the crisis of courage constituted by McCarthyism. Above all, it is Richard Nixon who "has converted lack of conviction into a pious faith." An "avowed believer in organized spontaneity," Nixon raises the question, amidst all the debate over the "old" Nixon and the "new" Nixon, whether there is a "real" Nixon, new or old. "One might say of Nixon that he is the most complete 'beatnik' on the political landscape," Wechsler comments. "In him the absence of conviction and commitment is most fully expressed."

Wechsler denies that the blandness of modern politics can be explained by the fact that we have run out of issues. He disputes "the view most commonly advanced by Henry Luce's publications . . . that America is so giddy a success story that it has rendered militant political liberalism obsolete." We still are faced, he points out, by the squalor of slums, the misery of the aged, and the inadequacies of our hospitals and schools. But, Wechsler insists, there are two issues above all which should call forth the same kind of fervor that shook the nation in the Thirties: the threat of nuclear devastation and the quest for human equality. Faced with these two challenges, how, he asks, can men say that there is nothing left worth fighting for?

Much of what Wechsler writes seems unanswerable, and some of it needed saying. Unfortunately, he is much stronger on exhortation and recrimination than he is on analysis. He seems unable to comprehend the political ex-

haustion of the postwar world save as a failure of character on the part of Johnson or Nixon or the liberals or the American people. Nor, although he has heard all the arguments, does he have any sympathy for the rejection by the present generation of the arid view of man and society held by the 1930s radical. He seems to have little conception of a world that is not political, or of a meaningful life that is not an endless militant crusade. In this world young people show "signs of life" only when they are marching on Washington, and even William Buckley seems in some ways admirable, since he has an "unblurred position," and has "managed to stir some sparks of earnestness in some young men and women." It almost seems that the fact of participation matters more than the substance. Either people are zealous or they are escapist. The fateful choice for man is between "engagement and indifference," and "engagement" always means political engagement. Wechsler has

only a passing interest in the quality of American life, which so concerned earlier radical writers like Randolph Bourne. He never seems to ask whether the chief reason for liberal failure in the past fifteen years may not be that the liberals have had so little to say.

All of this is unfortunate, for it limits the impact of Wechsler's main thesis. It is indeed appalling that the threat of nuclear war cannot even be debated without risking aspersions of disloyalty. It is humiliating to see the civil rights question treated with contemptuous reference to "the Negro vote," "as if only a few eccentric white men could possibly feel strongly about the subject of equality." It is understandable that Wechsler responds to such a political situation with anger. Yet to respond only with anger, and to suppose our present political failure is simply the product of a failure of character, serves only to create a fresh obstacle to the new political turn Mr. Wechsler so fervently desires.

Made in USA

"America and the Image of Europe: Reflections on American Thought," by Daniel Boorstin (Meridian, 192 pp. Paper, \$1.35), takes the position that our culture is not so beholden to the Continent as generally believed. "America in the Modern World" is the most recent book by D. W. Brogan.

By D. W. Brogan

IT IS usually a mistake to publish volumes of reprinted papers; there is seldom an adequate central theme to justify demanding from the reader a longer spell of attention than he is accustomed to give to a magazine piece. But Professor Boorstin's volume has an adequate central theme and it supports and justifies the separate pieces. Even the kindly but acutely critical essay on the search of the Puerto Rican intellectuals for a "national" history and culture is organically related to the main theme of this collection, the special character of American culture and the new solutions made possible and necessary by the American experience. So the Puerto Ricans, instead of trying to dredge up a "usable past" out of their not very exciting annals, ought to ponder the question of whether they do not gain a great deal from their historical "poverty." And it is suggested that one thing they have gained is the fact that their politics is only to a slight degree ideological.

So are the politics of the United States—and a good thing too. For Professor Boorstin attacks the now traditional habit of the American intellectual of using "Europe" as a mirror, either to illustrate what is right or what is wrong with American life, to justify regrets or encourage hopes. Equally, Professor Boorstin objects to the bulk importation of European concepts like the Enlightenment, to the explanation of the politics of Thomas Jefferson in terms of the books he read or the European ideas that inspired him. We don't, in fact, know what exactly did inspire him (we never do, even when we have the mass information now provided in Jefferson's case) but there is surely a *prima facie* case for suggesting that it was as much his experience as a Virginia planter, lawyer, and politician as his reading of Locke or Montesquieu that made the Jefferson we know (or think we know). And this is even more true of Franklin. However, we ought also to note that there was a two-way traffic,



Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

"A GOOD HANDY FIGURE"

"Seven is a good handy figure in its way, picturesque, with a savor of the mythical; one might say that it is more filling to the spirit than a dull academic half-dozen." Thus Thomas Mann in "The Magic Mountain." Here are ten additional quotations, offered by Doris DeTar of Concord, California, in each of which this "mythical" figure is found. She asks you to give the sources. Answers on page 30.

1. She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.
2. There come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:
And there shall arise after them seven years of famine.
3. I am the owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain.
4. I want that crude hard-fisted tale,
Where seven more redskins bit the dust.
5. Here lies, but seven years old, our little maid,
Once of the darkness, oh, so sore afraid.
6. We shall never understand one another until we reduce the language to
seven words.
7. But mice and rats and such small deer
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.
8. The sun
Drew semicircles smooth and high.
A week was seven domes across a desert,
And any afternoon took long to die.
9. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render
a reason.
10. And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.
11. Seven cities warred for Homer being dead,
Who living had no roofe to shrowd his head.
12. In seven states he cut up dadoes.
He's gone with the buffler and the desperadoes.