

1975 Distinguished Teacher of the Year

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During the last few years, the United States has been subjected to several international events which were unprecedented in our history; some were felt as real shocks by the American people while others were of a more indirect character, but equally severe in their present and potential impact on the American scene. Only a few of these need to be mentioned here.

In the second half of 1973, the oil-producing countries formed a cartel and imposed a four-fold price increase and a temporary boycott on the purchase of oil by the industrialized nations, thereby creating a world-wide energy crisis. The United States immediately felt the consequences of this action, just as other industrialized nations. Although our economic system and that of the whole modern world were seriously threatened, we had to accept the situation without being able to take any effective retaliatory steps.

The necessary disengagement from Vietnam was another event which had serious consequences for the U. S. Although we always considered our involvement a "limited" action, it is probably the first time in our history that we could not bring to a successful conclusion a venture which we started with great expectations. The rest of the world certainly took note of this; our status as a superpower was adversely affected, and our apparent weakness has been and is still being exploited.

More indirect but equally serious was the effect when the U. S. dollar had to be devaluated twice between 1971 and 1973. For the last 50 years the dollar had been the undisputed world key currency and the foundation of the international monetary system. The difficulties of the dollar not only forced a readjustment of the monetary system, but also created a world-wide distrust concerning the future stability of our currency. The dollar is still the key currency of the world and used more than any other; however, it no longer enjoys the undisputed confidence of world business and government leaders.

Finally, one more insidious development needs to be mentioned. The capitalist free enterprise system, which has brought to the U. S. and many other parts of the world unprecedented growth and prosperity, is under continuous attack and is being discarded by many nations. Although the U. S. system is continuously changing and evolving, our changes are not nearly as much or in the direction as they are in the United Kingdom and several other European countries. Our model is no longer the envy of others or to be emulated. To the contrary, new

systems are emerging, often with less or very little free enterprise spirit or democratic underpinnings, thus endangering even our own faith in the U. S. system.

A thorough analysis of the above-outlined events and developments raises two fundamental questions. First of all, it must be asked whether these actions and events were of a special nature, portending only a temporary setback in the U. S. position, or whether the fundamental structure has changed and new developments must be expected with possible adverse effects on the U. S. The answer, for me at least, is that we are faced with a new situation and that we will have to learn to cope with many more unpleasant developments. This answer is based on two harsh realities.

In the first place, the world's power relationships during the last 20 years have drastically changed. Although the U. S. is still the strongest nation, based on political as well as economic realities, and thus the largest or key factor in international affairs, our international predominance has diminished, while the strength of other nations has grown. The U. S. no longer can dominate world development, but must closely collaborate or coexist with other nations that have become powerful and can become ultimately our world equals. This realization is particularly striking when one looks at cold statistical facts. Of the present world population of about 4 billion people, our country has merely about 210 million, or less than 6 percent; by the year 2000, when the world's population may reach 7 billion, this percentage may be down to 4 percent.

A second factor in the analysis of the question of whether recent events are transitional leads to the observation that the U.S. has become far more dependent on other nations than ever before and no end is in sight. Whether we analyze our need for foreign raw materials and some foodstuffs, or whether we discuss our export markets which are vital to our industries, or if we look at the international pollution of the air and water, the creation of nuclear capabilities abroad or the use of ocean resources, the answer is the same. The U.S. and all the nations have become increasingly interdependent. What we do profoundly affects the world, but, more than ever before, what the rest of the world does inevitably will affect us. We have no option anymore to return to "splendid isolation" as was possible in earlier periods. We now must face a new dimension in our affairs, namely the international dimension, which will exert increasingly powerful forces on us.

The second key question, and really the focus of this short talk is: Is the U.S. educational system preparing us, the American people, for the reduced U.S. superiority, the new dependence on other nations and for our increased vulnerability to foreign events and developments over which we have no control? Or, in a broader sense, are we obtaining through our educational system and through our information media sufficient and continuous new knowledge of the world in order to evaluate and understand evolving situations? The answer to these questions,

in my humble opinion, is: No, or at least we are not being well enough prepared or informed. The new international dimension at all educational levels, in the news media, in literature, on radio and television, etc., is often slighted, overlooked or inadequately presented.

The above conclusion comes as no surprise to many informed people. The United States throughout its 200-year history has been primarily internally oriented, first in its rapid development when opening the West and then as leader of the industrialized nations and the free enterprise system. Furthermore, since the U.S. is large and separated by broad oceans from other nations, the American people always have felt somewhat apart. All public opinion polls confirm that the basic "inward" orientation continues. One of last year's polls showed that the public's preoccupation with domestic problems overshadowed concern about international events by the widest margin ever recorded in that poll since the early 1930s. This is not to say that the public does not show great interest in the world travels and international meetings of our national leaders or that the public is not willing to contribute to the relief of foreign calamities. But these are transitional interests, usually leaving more of a feeling of superiority than a realization that this is part of our inevitable evolving international interdependence.

The problem is even more complex, because there seems to be developing new anti-foreign trends. There have recently been some anti-foreign demonstrations when a foreign company wanted to acquire an old-line U.S. concern. It seems to be quite in order for American capital to invest abroad; but it is a different matter when foreigners want to acquire land, business, etc., in the U.S.

If the basis thesis of this discussion is valid, namely that we are increasingly involved in international problems and that we are not really being prepared for this, then the international dimension in education and information must be greatly strengthened. We need more and more knowledge about the world and particularly of social, political and economic developments in foreign nations, and we must obtain a much deeper understanding of how other nations reach decisions in their countries.

Achieving better understanding is not easy because we can probably never fully comprehend other people's motivations, beliefs and cultural values which may be different from ours. We must become more aware of this in order to reach reasonable levels of cooperation rather than confrontation.

Increased international travel and the learning of foreign languages are important stepping stones in this process. Travel in both directions brings enrichment and, hopefully, better understanding. Learning another language is an introduction into the thinking and concepts of other people. Exposure to foreign ideas, customs, etc., can also be greatly increased as more American students study abroad and foreign students come to the U.S. for their education.

The universities, which stand at the frontier of knowledge, have a special responsibility in strengthening the international dimension of education. This is not just the province of a few natural and social scientists but of the university as a whole. As a community of scholars pursuing goals of excellence in the profession and quality of education, it is our task to recognize important trends and structural changes in society and the whole world. The changed U.S. international position necessitates the strengthening of the international dimension in the educational process. This involves many activities, such as:

- Scholarly exchanges with foreign universities in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, including exchange visits of professors and officials, lectures to various university groups, interchanges in the arts, music and literature, etc.
- International research and research collaboration, directly or through other institutions, governments, international concerns, etc.
- Exchanging ideas with foreign visitors to our institutions through seminars, informal meetings, etc.

All of the above steps, and many others, will contribute not only to the enrichment of the university community in a narrow sense, but in fact is an important enrichment of students and the community or town in which the university is located. In essence, it enhances the quality of our education and helps to carry out one of its main functions: widening the educational horizon and preparing our students and citizens for new developments. Strengthening the international dimension in education is a real challenge of our times.