

**IS**

**THIS**

**UPEI?**

The following excerpts from John C. Sawhill's essay, "The Unlettered University" first appeared in the February '79 issue of Harper's Magazine. Sawhill has served in the office of Management and Budget, and the Federal Energy Administration of the United States. He is currently president of New York University and was a guest this summer of Jimmy Carter's at Camp David. For me, Sawhill has indeed brought the issue of "the university" into perspective. A perspective that can in fact be applied to the situation here at UPEI. Perhaps we, as a university community, should examine ourselves in the face of Sawhill's arguments. What do you think?

Mark Ledwell

I had just finished teaching my undergraduate seminar on ethical perspectives on energy policy at NYU when a bright young woman walked up to discuss a philosophical question that troubled her. Impressed by her knowledge of moral and social

philosophy, I asked her why she was majoring in business rather than in one of the humanities. She replied, "How else can I get a job?"

This student's ambition reflects what has gone wrong in higher education today. Once considered an essential enterprise for the improvement of American society, higher education has become the handmaiden of successful career planning, spurning both creative teaching and the rigorous pursuit of knowledge. Now that higher education is viewed largely as a passport to the job market, can we again create an institution and a curriculum that recognize the value of learning for its own sake?

All that we know about ourselves and our world is codified in a body of learning (liberal arts) that illuminates our own struggles and those of our ancestors, so that each succeeding generation profits in some measure from the experience and vision of the past...The liberal arts enable each individual to make what

W.E.B. DuBois described as "that fine adjustment which forms the secret civilization."

Liberal education implies as much an attitude toward learning as a specific course of study...its importance extends far beyond the formal disciplines that compose its syllabus. ...Lately, liberal education has fallen - or perhaps it has been pushed - into disrepute.

Undergraduate instructors are distracted from teaching by the demands of research and publication necessary for professional advancement and tenure... America's corporate community also nurtured institutions of higher learning as resources for private enterprise. Business and industry are the nation's largest employers; their needs for personnel - supported by their wealth and implemented by their seasonal visits of recruiters on campus - encourage students to sacrifice broad courses of study in a variety of disciplines to the narrow pursuits that guarantee

them employment upon graduation...The disposition of the students themselves has further damaged the state of the liberal arts.

Perhaps the most persuasive argument for the re-emergence of liberal education in institutions of higher learning is the fact that such studies inform human nature, and are as much a part of us as our physical needs. They allow us to grow emotionally and intellectually.

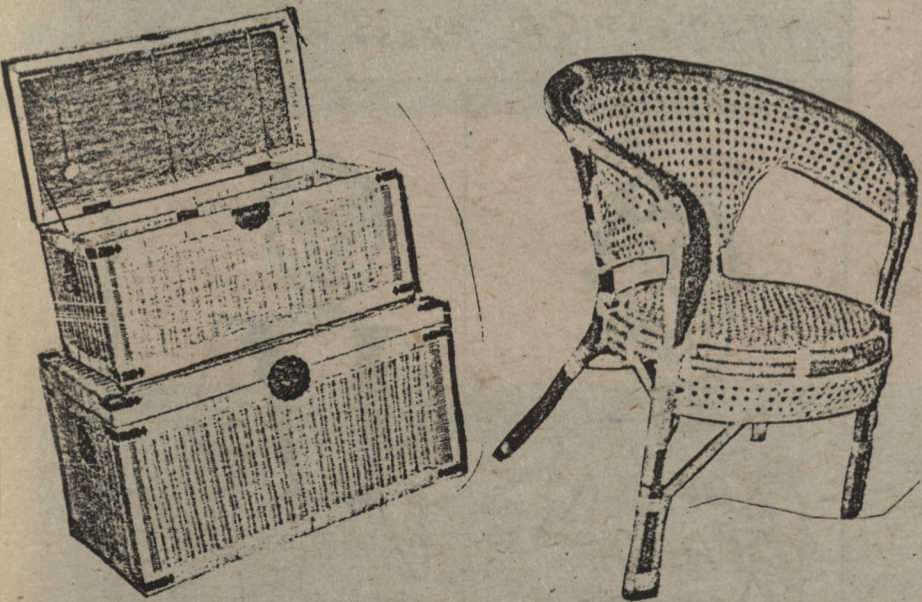
...Limited, career directed studies alone provide no lasting solutions to the multitude of difficult and potentially dangerous problems we confront. The universities must reassort the balance between the transient interests of a particular society and the enduring truths of a civilization. Universities must cease doing the work of government and industry and reclaim their position as the agency that instructs and enlightens these institutions in how best to function for the benefit of all.

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