Business Men in Control of American Colleges

Member of Princeton's Teaching Force Criticises Condition

Which He Regards as Baneful Autocracy in Higher Education

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Our present war has been designed by its leaders as a crusade against the issue of democracy, and to the United States has now frankly become a test of the conflict definitely at the altar of our own

liberty and the principles of self-government. By a declaration of war for the democratisation of Germany, however, we have invited the declarations of the faults of our democracy at home. Our defining Germany as the enemy is defining ourselves.

There are few faults at home more glaring than the lack of a sense of change, the refusal to acknowledge the most striking anomalies of our national life that in due very institutions which educate for self-government our future men and women of affairs there is intrenched an anarchy which does violence to every national political ideal. The American college, not unlike a municipal corporation, is a "body politic" which owes its corporate existence to a charter granted by the State. It is, after all, not unlike a city also in its existence, a "body politic." A group of people living together in one community and subject to laws, rules, and regulations. But the Faculty in a college is not the Faculty in a city.

And, finally, they may exercise the power of deciding all cases of violations of the college community laws without a hearing, and from their decision there can be no appeal.

Not only can these boards exercise power in disregard of the faculty's responsibility whatever to those over whom they exert such immense control, but, in private institutions, they escape responsibility to the sovereign State itself. College charters are "contracts" between the State and the Trustees by the ruling of the Supreme Court in the Dartmouth College case. As such they are protected by the Federal Constitution from any interference by the State Government that has not the sanction of the Trustees. Such an unmitigable expression of the will of the State of New Jersey, for instance, as an act of Legislation ratified on a referendum by every voter in the Community, would not comply Princeton University to exert the power that it is not only the Farmers of the State, nor prevent it from teaching its students that the members of the Republican party is the only hope of internal prosperity.

That Trustees do not exercise in practice every one of the powers granted to them by law is not of any lack of authority, but merely a lack of desire to do so. They have kept the body of knowledge from the students that they have conceived of most importance, and in so doing, they have given the students the knowledge that at any moment they can gather them back. They look upon the control of finance, for instance, and of the appointment and dismissal of the faculty, as the one of the most all-embracing, but still a hand upon the general administration which is the same. Only in the less important fields of educational detail and student discipline have they allowed their hold to slacken.

Such absolute autocracy at the core of the mind and spirit of our national life is not itself a standing rebuke to our democratic professions of faith. But the personnel of this autocracy raises the reek to the level of a sharp incitement.

Economic and business stakes in whatever kind of an education it shall be. What these stakes in activity may be incurred in those who fail to reapportionment be forfeited, for instance, by the Trustees, of courses refused admissibility to the curriculum for a like reason, or the timely hiatus from above that have forced a teacher into line. Professor J. Mack Williams, in his "The Principles of Social Organization," states that "the distribution of society is not, in a large part, the distribution of this, and not in a small part, the distribution of that."

It is to be hoped that the war will bring to the United States, as it has to other nations, a searching self-examination into our inner state of democracy. The native might even imagine that this successful business group which has been the most conspicuous in its advocacy of the armed democratisation of Germany would be the first to see themselves as the local Kaisers of our educational world—and abdicate. But, at any rate, the discovery by the public at large of this demagogic autocracy will do much for the post-bellicon reconstruction of our national life.