Editorial - Progress, the First Hundred Years

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Editorial—
Progress

the First Hundred Years

IT IS the year of the centennial and everyone is in a state of excitation and jubilation, proud of the fact that Iowa State College has existed on the face of the earth for one hundred years. And like any other centennial event, all concerned are comparing the old with the new, and calling the difference “progress”. There’s the new Home-Economics building almost ready for occupation. Oh, and there’s Helser Hall, a new dorm for boys, and if you have time you can see the atomic research buildings and the new addition on the Memorial Union. Yes, this is progress. The total weight of building stone, glass and girders has increased over the years. But let’s not spend too much time on the beauty of the college. Let’s take a look at its personality, that is to say, the people that make up the institution.

They’ve increased in weight, and in numbers too, for the college can boast almost 10,000, and in future years (with all the emphasis on the technical student) one can expect in the 20,000’s by 1970. Ah, this is impressive, but can one honestly say that the students have “progressed” in their attitudes, ideas and actions? No, they’ve actually degenerated.

The students of years past were a better bunch by far. They laughed, cried and sang together, they did some crazy things that the “modern” student tosses off as childish. They made themselves heard, they were so loud that the bearded administrators and faculty were sometimes frightened but more often proud. If those “old fashioned” students didn’t like the way things were run in the field of politics they protested through the press, or by affiliating themselves with a group that supposedly had an answer or they rioted (not for the purpose of appropriating female
undergarments, however). They simply took advantage of their youthful vitality and their new found importance.

But today's student of Iowa State College sits idly by, spending time in the commons playing bridge, or downtown in one of the saloons, and he fights the college courses with his mentality and has no problem fighting for survival (his stomach is full). To him this is all a little game we play where the winners get job offers. The paradox to all of this is that his situation right now is actually more critical than when students were joining the Communist Party during the depression! His laxity could mean the downfall of Democracy when he is running the society. He is the fortunate educated one; the minority group that the uneducated population will depend upon, and he doesn't give a damn!

II

Mention was made of student degeneracy, and when previous student bodies are examined it is easy to see the symptoms of this degeneracy. First, the Iowa State student now has very little sense of humor. In this category we don't include the grimy, cowardly, mudslinging boys of Pi Zi. The only humor they add to the campus is that which is directed at the members for their attempts. Many years ago, the seniors showered the underclassmen with a fire hose during a banquet. This wasn't exactly what one could call intelligent but it was fun no doubt. Well, both the old and the modern had their inanities, but the type of humor that is being specifically referred to is that type which was parody and satire of something that showed a degree of thinking.

In this comparison one notices the absence of any organized societies that were so prevalent. These were groups of individuals who would sit around and actually talk about and be concerned with their situations as students. They might even try to do something about it. (In France, several weeks ago, the students and faculty had a demonstration advocating higher pay for the latter.) The only groups that adorn ISC are organized residences which in
effect accomplish nothing. These groups have big sounding names like "Greek" and "Independent" and they bicker.

Campus politics is another area that would make Dr. Beardshear do a half-gainer in his casket if he were to see the deplorable state that his campus politicians are in. What happened to the candidate who could stand on the steps of a campus building and draw a group of students around him with his oratory, humor and campaign platform? What happened to political demonstrations that were in part, spontaneous, and everyone was anxious and excited for his candidate? The all-college nominating convention (something invented by the present administration to help this political apathy situation) was a good idea, but it was too bad that it was even necessary. At ISC there will be no real spirited campaigns, because the candidates will have to be Independent or Greek and this fact seals their fate.

When one remembers the student activities of the Hungarians during their revolt it brings to mind a question concerning just what the American student would have done in a similar situation. Has the student been indoctrinated so much with this technical tyranny and mental conformity that he would cower in fright with the appearance of invading forces, or would he stand and fight? Well, you might say he isn't fighting creeping socialism or social conformity so why should one expect him to battle material forces?

It is doubtful that the American student would run when faced with danger, now, but the student had better get serious about things or his degenerate trend will make the bicentennial year a little more than a sad occasion.

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