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During the past few months, the air has been filled with a barrage of criticism mainly directed to the deficiencies of Rice as a university. Few have felt inclined to defend the institution on any score. Criticisms and self-appraisal are healthy signs of development and, in the great universities of the world, self-appraisal is a continuing process associated with social evolution. As a matter of philosophy, increased capacity for self-appraisal is the very essence of a university education.

IN LEVELING criticism and suggestion, it might be well to re-examine the specialized aspects of the ecology of the institution. No university exists in a vacuum, and the myth of the ivory tower is indeed a myth. Historically, this university was founded in the midst of a culture which was feeling only the first urgings to alter the ethos of the free-booter and the pioneer. Viewed in this way, the founding of Rice Institute was a bold concept indeed; and, in an attempt, at times unconscious, to avoid the decivilizing effects of an environment still clinging to the traditions of the rope and pistol, the institution tended to withdraw from contact with its surrounding society. This had several interesting effects. Withdrawal was partially successful in producing isolation from the mores of the Southwest, but it also resulted in decreased breadth of contact with the world outside the Southwest. In its insulation from local culture, the institution tended to develop as an insular, provincial institution with some of the attributes of local culture.

THE DEVELOPMENT of unrest and dissatisfaction in faculty and students can be compared with the development of dissatisfaction in the culture of the region. The region is still groaning under a yoke of provincialism but shows signs of emergent development. The settling of differences by the use of pistols is somewhat less acceptable now than fifty years ago, although the number of Houstonians who carry firearms is still in the thousands. The development of social responsibility in the community is embryonic, but this may be construed as encouraging. The scandalous fiasco concerning the operation of a public hospital, the vocal dissatisfaction with a quite inadequate public library, the heated discussion of zoning, and the criticisms of machinations of a Neanderthal school board—all indicate a measure of dissatisfaction with the serving of public responsibility and with the stage of civilization.

IT MUST BE admitted by its most vociferous critics that, within its cultural framework, the University remains ahead of the community in its development. There seems to be little evidence, for example, that the University regards the federal government as a foreign power rather than as an instrument of the people. The administration of the University has fostered the tradition of academic freedom in its finest sense. The columns of this newspaper have furnished evidence of this fact. This very tolerance places the University ahead of its cultural surroundings.

AT THE RISK of being called Pollyanna, we can regard the present unrest as a sign of vigor. There seems to be a preponderance of opinion that we have a long way to go in developing from a good provincial institution to an institution which is an important civilizing arm of the state, the nation, and the world. My proposition is a simple one: Rice can become a great university. We may have a way to go, but we can go wherever we wish. This makes our time an exciting one. Our impatience with the state of affairs in the University could result in developments which are new and unique in American universities. We have a refreshing opportunity for bold thinking and ideas in a section of the country having relatively primitive cultural commitments. We have a situation which might allow a greater flow of ideas and educability between the two "worlds" of Mr. C. P. Snow, a considerable extension of what is commonly referred to as interdisciplinary study. This would require considerable thought and effort on the part of students and faculty. Above all, it would require maximum uses of the brain. None of this means that we need to turn the University out and start over. We should approach these developments as conservatizes (conservatism being defined as keeping those things worth keeping), being careful that we distinguish carping from constructive criticism. Let us proceed with an experiment in scholarship and education.