

Backs Civilization Course

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The decision of Columbia College to suspend Contemporary Civilization B as a required sophomore course is read with real regret. The fact that contemporary society is exceedingly complex should be the challenge of college teachers and not a reason for suspending the effort to understand.

The decision is in line with trends that endanger higher education in the United States—the increasing specialization of the teacher so that those in one field cannot converse intelligently with those in another; the status satisfaction of recognition as a teacher of a specialty rather than a teacher of youth; the administrative evaluation of teachers in which research contributions in a specialization are recognized as more important than teaching and interpretation; the college personnel policy of assigning the most inexperienced to the most difficult of teachings.

All these constitute a threat to the education of youth. Subject specialization and knowledge does not necessarily make for the kind of intelligence and sensitivity needed in a world that does not operate along academic divisional lines.

It is hoped that the suspension of Contemporary Civilization B lasts no more than three years and that in this period Columbia professors will put together a new contemporary civilization course that

will include in "A" and "B" both East and West and focus on the problems of man living with man around the whole world.

What other objectives should higher education have if man is to survive? FREDERICK L. REDEFER,
Professor of Education, New York University.

New York, July 10, 1961.