Your instructions to the members of this Committee, in your letter of September 28, 1958, were to analyze the Contemporary Civilization course in Columbia College, especially its relation to the introductory course work in the participating departments and its adequacy in meeting the needs envisaged in the original decision for its establishment. In following this mandate your Committee in the intervening months held seven formal meetings, the minutes of which have been sent to you in order that you might be aware of the direction of our deliberations. Attendance at these sessions was remarkably faithful, and the discussions—whether with members of the faculty who generously gave us the benefit of their counsel or among ourselves on an agreed topic or a memorandum produced by one of our number—have been lively over a wide range of matters. We have had some unsolicited communications from members of the faculty, and in addition our executive secretary has conducted among members of the faculty a series of inquiries on various factual matters as well as on the opinions of those responsible in several capacities for the staffing, the design, and the teaching of the course.

We cannot assume that our analysis of the course and its needs is in any way representative of the views of a majority of the faculty or that our recommendations are consistent with those views. Our comments and recommendations do reflect, however, an effort to take into account the evidence and the judgments that were available to us.

In keeping with the spirit of its instructions, your Committee at the outset considered whether the Contemporary Civilization course had outlived its usefulness and whether it might, in the interests of the College's wholesome development, be drastically altered. No one, however, was disposed to reject the aims of general education as they have existed in Columbia College or to conclude that a course in Contemporary Civilization could not, in the future as in the past, contribute significantly to the achievement of those aims. A pioneer in general education, Columbia College derives continuing benefits from the conception of collegiate education as something beyond a collection of subject fragments or even a good grasp of a single subject. Faculty as well as students have gained from the intellectual effort demanded of them by the goals of general education: an understanding of the course and forms of human history, a comprehension of the modes of esthetic experience, and a grasp of the changing concepts through which a society attempts to understand itself.

The perplexities presently confronting the Contemporary Civilization program demand consideration of the best ways to approach these permanent objectives. Your Committee's recommendations, therefore, are designed to improve general education at Columbia, not to diminish its importance or to begin a process of curtailment. To ask whether existing means are adequate to cherished ends is in the best spirit of the liberal arts, of the traditions of Columbia College, and of the history of the Contemporary Civilization program itself.
A college curriculum at its best reflects an intellectual conception. Like other organizing ideas, it appears at times fairly satisfactory and at others not. Periods of doubt, speculation, and experiment inevitably alternate with periods of consolidation. Columbia College is in the midst of a period of the first kind. Reconsideration of its aims and curriculum has so far touched such issues as advanced standing for exceptionally well-prepared freshmen, conversion of the senior year into the beginnings of graduate study, introduction of a major system, and increase in the number of seminars. Your Committee's recommendations have their place within this larger framework of discussion and innovation.

One implication of this diagnosis is obvious. In a period of exploration any set of recommendations is properly to be regarded as tentative and temporary. If the College faculty accepts all or some of your Committee's proposals, its decision will necessarily represent an experiment that may succeed or fail. Well-conceived innovation will itself point the path to further improvement.

I. THE PROBLEM.

What are the difficulties that now handicap the Contemporary Civilization program? They are several and they are closely interconnected, but they come to a focus most sharply on the problem of staff. In its four decades of life the Contemporary Civilization program has encountered increasing difficulties in excessive staff turnover, disproportionate numbers of junior officers of instruction, and low staff morale. The advantages of freshness and enthusiasm frequently brought to teaching by young instructors are undeniable, but the current staff turnover of approximately 50 per cent per year creates the confusion of the revolving door, places an unduly high proportion of instruction in the hands of inexperienced teachers, makes difficult the recruitment of the most qualified examination and revision committees, and lessens the sentiment of corporate involvement that has characterized the program in its best years.

In 1959-1960 only three full professors and five associate professors were included in a Contemporary Civilization staff of thirty-eight. The proportion has been lower in some years, but the trend is unmistakable. Why do not more men with seniority and tenure participate? No mystery surrounds the answers. The pressure of upper-college and graduate work and of other University responsibilities is an evident factor. Unquestionably it is accentuated by the prevailing view at Columbia that an invitation to teach a graduate course is a token of success. But a teaching program that includes such a course, an introductory departmental course, and a seminar or advanced course in the upper college leaves room for nothing else. Some of those not yet offering graduate instruction, moreover, fear that participation in Contemporary Civilization will stamp them as College material only. In addition, some senior men abstain because of basic dissatisfaction with the materials or with the heavy classroom schedule. Finally, the well-founded judgment exists that adequate teaching of Contemporary Civilization, especially if it includes service on examination and revision committees, demands more work of an instructor than does a specialized course in his own field.
Existing staffing arrangements carry with them the predictable consequence of low and declining morale. Many young instructors regard their obligation to teach Contemporary Civilization as the substantial price to be paid for employment at Columbia, not as an intellectual challenge to their professional skill. Since the suspicion is abroad that service in the sequence aids the teacher neither in his effort to advance at Columbia nor in his hope of attractive alternative employment, the natural response of many instructors is to spend as little time as possible in preparing for their Contemporary Civilization classes and as much time as possible in completing their dissertations or in other writing that may establish their reputations in their specialized fields.

None of these circumstances is novel. They were noted, for example, in the Macmahon Committee report nearly three years ago. Their increasing intensity, however, is alarming. Each year departmental chairman and representatives find it a little harder to furnish full quotas of qualified instructors. Each year the reluctance of Associate and full professors to join their juniors increases a trifle. And every year morale, that intangible but decisive element, falters more noticeably.

Two recent events have aggravated the situation. The first is the College Faculty's recent and laudable decision to introduce a major system. This was an acknowledgment of the positive value in a liberal education of command of a specialized field, provided it rests on a broad and solid base. Between these objectives competition for the student's time is inevitable, and it is beneficial if it compels careful analysis of conflicting claims. Your Committee's judgment is that this competition will demand continuous experimentation by the College, close supervision of trial solutions, and careful appraisal of their effects. Our recommendations, chosen as an accommodation and not as a bloodless compromise, reflect these objectives.

For quite understandable reasons members of the social science departments prefer their major students to take introductory work in the sophomore year. If introductory courses are postponed until the junior year, then the senior year must serve as best it can as the vehicle for both intermediate and advanced work. In consequence many students come to more specialized topics with an inadequate background and make smaller intellectual gains than an earlier start might have permitted. Severe as these costs must appear, and they have been reduced only slightly by recent attempts to lighten the burden of the freshman year, departments might bear them with equanimity if their members were convinced that the advantages of the existing Contemporary Civilization program were substantial and permanent, whether for their majors or for all Columbia undergraduates. This, it appears, is not the predominating judgment of the faculty in the social sciences.

A second complicating event is the recently established four-year engineering program. These additional undergraduates, who at least for the time being are committed to participation in general education courses, further increase the need for competent staff; their presence in considerable numbers greatly reduces the possi-
bility that the departments can arrange the programs of their staffs so as to achieve a wholesome distribution among Contemporary Civilization, introductory departmental courses, and advanced departmental work; and their addition to the collegiate community brings into clearer question the appropriate role of Contemporary Civilization in undergraduate education at Columbia. Your Committee is alarmed that even in 1959-1960, when the number of engineering undergraduates was relatively small, nearly one-third of the Contemporary Civilization staff were teaching only in that course. Without appropriate changes in the course and in the engineering program, that proportion is certain to increase, to the disadvantage of all concerned.

All of these doubts and questions converge more sharply upon Contemporary Civilization B than upon the first year of the course. Contemporary Civilization A has had a long record of success. A number of philosophers, political theorists, and historians, even an economist or two, are committed to its continuation, and most faculty members in all fields are convinced of its value. The staffing difficulties and even some of the intellectual reservations that afflict the program touch the first-year course, but they are far more grave in the case of Contemporary Civilization B.

Why is this so? Why is it also true that over the years in none of its several versions has Contemporary Civilization B been completely satisfactory to participating departments, students, or the faculty at large?

While in the nature of the case no definitive answer presents itself, one major tendency of several social sciences—especially economics, anthropology, and sociology—comprises part of the explanation. This is the growing technicality of these subjects and the concomitant difficulty in translating technical language into ordinary discourse.

Upon the practitioners of these subjects this trend has had several effects. In the first place, it makes their own training longer and less accessible to the layman, to the point, perhaps, where time to examine allied subjects and to speculate upon the broader significance of a given subject is felt to be unavailable. Secondly, a technically trained instructor is likely to feel that no one who lacks a similar training can teach any important part of his subject. In comity he may accord the same measure of esteem to other subjects and conclude that he himself is unable adequately to present material drawn from them. Economists, practitioners of the most technical of the social sciences, are logically the most consistent exponents of this position. Insofar as the judgment of most social scientists concurs with these sentiments, the intellectual rationale of Contemporary Civilization B—which inevitably draws heavily upon the substantive content and the concepts of these fields—quivers and collapses. For unless instructors trained in one field can move responsibly and with confidence in others, no faith can be placed in a course that examines problems drawn from many areas of intellectual concern and employs the tools of all the social sciences in their analysis.
Especially considering the chronic difficulties of the second-year course, this problem cannot be attributed to a deficiency of will or to a remediable weakness in course design. Concentrating upon the twentieth century, its problems and its currents of thought, Contemporary Civilization B inevitably lacks the strengths of the first-year course, which draws for the most part upon materials of acknowledged importance whose interpretation is comparatively standardized, if only over an agreed range of controversy. The present design of the second-year course, which aimed at avoiding some of these difficulties, is, at least in this respect, beyond the reach of most inexperienced instructors. Its originators assumed that it would be taught primarily by staff who had already participated in Contemporary Civilization A, an assumption that has not been supported by experience and seems unlikely to be realized in the future. The consequences have been inescapable. As one of our number observed, "Intelligent superficiality may be well enough in dealing with matters that are profound; superficial treatment of less profound contemporary materials is dangerous."

II. RECOMMENDATIONS.

Although the recommendations that we have drawn from this analysis are for convenience principally classified under the two headings of curriculum and staff, we want to emphasize that the two, like the various phases of the problem, are closely interdependent.

A. Curriculum:

1. In the eyes of students and faculty alike, Contemporary Civilization A is a successful course. Without question it should continue in approximately its present form. The most substantial single improvement would be a reduction in the number of readings. Such a reduction would diminish the tendency toward fragmentation and breathlessness of pace that is a defect of the virtue of making coverage as nearly complete as two semesters will permit. This defect was criticized in 1957 by the Macmahon Committee. Apparently it has not been remedied in the interim.

Although your Committee recommends the retention of Contemporary Civilization A in essentially its present form, the College faculty will need to be sensitive to curricular changes in the better secondary schools. These are likely in the years ahead to have an effect on the educational impact of Contemporary Civilization. The good secondary schools probably will experiment more frequently and more successfully than ever before with general education programs resembling Contemporary Civilization A. Should this trend appear, the faculty will on occasion need to recast the course in order to retain the elements of intellectual challenge and novelty that have consistently been among its most effective features.

2. The case of Contemporary Civilization B is more complex. Past history and contemporary troubles combine to demand that the College once again consider the most persistent problem of the second-year course: to deal with twentieth-century ideas and insti-
tutions and thus to treat many of the problems and concepts of the modern social sciences, but without superficiality or distortion. On the premise that the way to experiment is to experiment, your Committee recommends the suspension of Contemporary Civilization B for three years. During this period the College should experiment with two varieties of courses designed to satisfy the continued requirement of a second year's study in the area of the social sciences.

a. The first type of course should consist of special departmental or interdepartmental offerings, proposed and, when approved, taught by interested senior members of the appropriate departments. Your Committee's discussions have evoked three illustrations of this variant. The first is a broad treatment of the emergence of the modern social sciences. As a second alternative, superior students might be offered an approved reading course in social science materials conducted on a modified tutorial basis and covering topics selected jointly by instructors and students. Finally, an introduction to the intellectual history of the physical sciences, emphasizing the development of modes of scientific thought, would build appropriately upon themes treated in Contemporary Civilization A and would do something to repair one of the major gaps in the Columbia general education program, the failure to treat the impact of science upon society. This would not be a course in science but one in the history of ideas and hence proper to meet the second-year requirement in the area of social science. The interests of the senior faculty who desire to participate should determine the list of courses. These examples are intended only to be illustrative.

b. At least initially, courses of this nature will enroll only a minority of the students. The majority will be expected to satisfy the requirement in a second fashion, by taking introductory courses offered by the departments of economics, government, anthropology, sociology, history and philosophy. Although these introductory courses should be initiated and sponsored by individual departments, these departments should be enjoined to formulate them in a manner that satisfies the criterion of relevance to the non-specialist but without lowering the technical standards required by the specific discipline. (See item 5, below).

3. In the normal course of events sophomores would take one or the other of these variants. However, as at present, some students will postpone satisfaction of the requirement until the junior or senior year. In such cases it may be desirable that the requirement be met by one of the special courses suggested in 2a above. In no case, however, should a student be permitted to meet the second-year requirement in the social sciences through an introductory course sponsored by his major department. He might take such a course as part of his major, but the requirement would have to be met by a course given under different auspices.

4. If these new courses are to achieve their proper objectives, some central control over their selection and administration is essential. For this purpose your Committee recommends the establishment of an interdepartmental committee. Probably it should take the shape of a subcommittee of the Committee on Instruction and owe its appointment to the Chairman of that committee. This new committee should be
empowered and directed to approve and oversee all courses—whatever their sponsorship—that are proposed in satisfaction of the second-year requirement in the social sciences.

5. As it acquires a history, this new committee may want to recommend to the faculty additional criteria for qualifying courses meeting the second-year requirement. Your Committee strongly urges the following three objectives as minimal conditions of acceptance or continuance. First, new courses in both categories should re-inforce Contemporary Civilization A by building as explicitly as possible on the themes of that course. Second, new courses should focus primarily upon the twentieth century. Contemporary Civilization A, entirely appropriately, contains little material on the period since 1900. If the program is to culminate in study of problems of the student's own lifetime, this must be a central concern of the second-year courses. Third, each of the courses should be concerned with some aspect or aspects of contemporary social science as a tendency in modern thought. This recommendation is essential if these new courses are not to curtail the Contemporary Civilization program but rather to achieve some of its purposes more effectively.

6. This proposed committee, if it is to succeed, must be both open-minded and willing to experiment, not only in examining course content but also in reviewing modes of instruction, methods of examination, and curricular materials. Although there is a long tradition, extending over the history of general education at Columbia, of teaching through small-group discussion, the committee should heed with sympathy the desires of lecturers who prefer large groups to small. It might well experiment with combinations of lectures and discussions, according to the materials and attitudes encountered.

B. Staffing:

For reasons that have already appeared, the Contemporary Civilization courses are taught in an overwhelming majority of cases by junior staff. Even if all of your Committee's recommendations are adopted by the relevant authorities, Contemporary Civilization A will, in all probability, continue to be largely the preserve of young instructors. We favor all possible efforts to increase participation by tenure personnel, but the prospects of any marked change from present practice appear slight. This being the case, the sensible approach is one designed to select the best young people available, to treat them well, and to rebuild the staff's weakened morale.

The remedies for low morale are neither simple nor automatic. Nevertheless, several measures should prove helpful.

1. The director of the Contemporary Civilization program should invariably be a person who holds a tenure position in the faculty. Preferably he should be a full professor who is willing to make a long-range commitment to the program. In the recent past the position of the director has been insecure. A long-term director of high standing in the University will do more than provide needed continuity of management. He will serve also as a demonstration to the Contemporary Civilization staff, the faculty at large, and even to
students that the College and the University put a high value upon the program.

2. New Contemporary Civilization instructors, particularly those who are not themselves graduates of Columbia College, need orientation in the history, goals, and customs of the program. Recent efforts in this direction seem to have been too limited and to have perpetuated unconstructive attitudes rather than to have contributed to the vitality of the program. A senior person who has himself enjoyed outstanding success as a teacher in the course should be placed in charge of a systematic orientation program for new instructors. This step too should serve as a symbol of the College's deep interest in the course and its staff.

3. A large majority of your Committee regards this third recommendation as perhaps its most important. All junior members of the Contemporary Civilization staff who have participated in the program for 2 1/2 to 3 years should be given a semester's leave with full pay. This proposal is not new. It was one of the "urgent remedial measures" recommended by the Macmahon Committee. In the past three years the need for it has become more rather than less urgent. Inevitably, as the Macmahon Committee recognized, participation in such courses as Contemporary Civilization may interfere seriously with the young instructor's professional development, especially if he is conscientious and even though the course provides him with a rewarding intellectual experience. The University and the College have stakes in both effective teaching in the general education programs and strong professional development of the staff. One or both seem to have suffered when these interests are in conflict. Material recognition of the special demands of Contemporary Civilization seems, therefore, seriously overdue.

If this recommendation were adopted the College in good conscience could demand peak performance both in Contemporary Civilization and in regular departmental teaching. Departments, moreover, might be expected to exercise still greater care in the selection and assignment of junior personnel. Finally and most important of all, such a plan would make unmistakably plain to all just how deep is the University's commitment to general education.

C. Related Matters:

1. By its terms of reference, your Committee has been instructed to center its attention upon the Contemporary Civilization program. Nevertheless, it has been continuously aware that this program is only one part of general education at Columbia College. In the deliberations of the faculty Contemporary Civilization should be linked with the full range of problems in general education. These problems include instruction in the Humanities sequence and the still unresolved question of how best to offer scientific education to the nonscientist.

2. General education, as we have recently been reminded, need not be confined to the first two college years. Your Committee agrees with this view and recommends that future curricular discussion con-
Consider the possibility of developing more senior-year courses of an integrating nature and an elective variety, much in the manner suggested in the Annual Report of the Dean of Columbia College for 1958-1959.

Your Committee's report, therefore, should be taken as only a single contribution to the widening discussion of general education at Columbia in the 1960's.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Bell
Robert D. Cumming
William E. Leuchtenburg
Carl S. Shoup
Lionel Trilling
Charles Wagley
Robert Lekachman, Executive Secretary
David B. Truman, Chairman
John G. Palfrey, Dean of Columbia College, ex-officio
Jacques Barzun, Dean of Faculties, ex-officio

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