THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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The First World War began late in July, 1914. Presumably it had some effect on the University of Pittsburgh from its outbreak, but if so, the effect before 1917 was both indirect and slight, so slight in fact, that consideration of the matter would be of little value to anyone. The school years 1914–1915 and 1915–1916 may therefore be omitted from the picture and attention limited to the school years 1916–1917, 1917–1918, and 1918–1919.

On January 1, 1917, the net total enrollment in the University was 4,076. One year later it had fallen to 3,446, a decrease of approximately fifteen and one-half per cent, due largely to the enlistment in military service of 450 students.

It is an interesting fact that the University of Pittsburgh anticipated the entrance of the United States into the World War by placing its available resources at the disposal of the government on March 27, 1917. The entry of the United States in April drew upon the personnel of the University, not only for soldiers, but also for administrators and directors of various projects of research, training, and organization, mainly projects in the fields of science, engineering, and medicine. Two hundred students had enlisted in some form of war service by June 30.

On June 7, 1917, a department of military science and tactics was established with Dean H. B. Meller of the School of Mines as head of the department and commandant of cadets. About 600 students thus received military training.

At the beginning of the regular school year, 1917–1918, all physically fit male students were required to spend five hours a week in military drill. They were organized into twelve companies of approximately fifty each. Ten of the companies were on the campus and two at the School of Pharmacy. After February 1, 1918, a unit of the Reserve Officers Training Corps was established, with Colonel H. W. Stickle, as Professor of Military Science and Tactics.

Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on March 30, 1943. By way of preface, Dr. James explained that his paper was based largely on some unpublished materials of the school year, 1918–1919, that he had happened to preserve.—Ed.
It was the desire of the Federal Government and of the University that, so far as possible, regular courses should be continued during the war and great effort was made to do this. But it was inevitable that special war courses should be introduced. The School of Economics gave a training course for men preparing to serve the supply division of the Ordnance Department. The School of Pharmacy gave a special course for war service, embodying aspects of chemistry, medicine, and sanitary engineering.

The Medical School organized a Base Hospital which was soon sent abroad.

The School of Engineering offered three important war courses: (1) code work for wireless operators, with 206 registrants; (2) radio communication, with 10 registrants, a course twice repeated; and (3) gas engines, auto mechanics, and sheet metal, with respectively 100, 150, and 70 registrants. The government soon began to send men here from other regions. Enrollment arose to 1,200 men by June 15, 1918, 1,800 men by August 15, 1918, and 2,221 by October 1, 1918. In the school year 1918–1919 these men formed Section B of the Student Army Training Corps.

To such special war courses must be added a course on mental tests in connection with military service, a course on war problems, and courses in Military German and Military French.

All this was but a prelude to the greater activities of 1918 and 1919. On March 1, 1918, a unit of the senior division of the Reserve Officers Training Corps was established in the University. By the close of the school year, 1917–1918, 151 members of the faculty and 668 students had entered war service. The regular summer school of 1918 dropped in registrations from 538 in the previous year to 472. A feature of the summer school was a two weeks Americanization Institute with forty-five registrants.

But the summer of 1918 saw tremendous activity on the campus in special training related to war service. As already mentioned, by August 15, 1918, the number of men in special war training, mainly in the School of Engineering, increased to 1,800. By the opening of school on October 1, this number had increased to 2,231. At this point may be mentioned many war activities, not immediately connected with training for military service, with no attempt to date or describe them. These involved participation in various forms of support for the war effort, such as the purchase
of Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps, contributions to the Student Friendship War Fund and the Red Cross, and work with the University Red Cross Auxiliary. In all these lines the University population performed very creditably.

The semester beginning October 1, 1918, was the period of the Student Army Training Corps. Plans for carrying out this provision of the government were formulated in the first week of September, and preparations in the University for the S.A.T.C. were completed by October 1. The appearance of the campus had changed greatly in less than a month. Some half a dozen more enormous barracks and an enormous mess hall had been hurriedly constructed on the upper campus. Another such structure served as a Y.M.C.A. hut.

The regular men students of the semester, to the number of 1,800, were organized as Section A of the Student Army Training Corps. Men previously in training were classified as Section B. Since the men of Section B filled the large wooden barracks, it was necessary to find new quarters for those of Section A. They were quartered, therefore, in the Armory, in the German Club, in Memorial Hall, in barracks on Atwood Street, and in the Studebaker Building on Forbes Street, occupied now by the Nash Motors Company.

As in 1917–1918, so in 1918–1919, the attempt was made to carry on old regular courses in the curricula as far as possible, especially for girls in the institution. This was not easy and in some cases it was necessary to abandon old and familiar courses. Particular war courses were introduced in various schools and departments such as the war service course in the School of Pharmacy, a special two-year course in Chemistry, a course in Military French, some work in Military German, and an Americanization course with 184 students enrolled. The records show, for instance, that in modern languages, Professor Reginald Johnson and six instructors carried 24 sections of an S.A.T.C. course in Military French with a total registration of 600, in addition to 14 sections other than S.A.T.C. with a total registration of 398.

Such special courses, however, were somewhat overshadowed by a general course for S.A.T.C. men, usually entitled War Issues, but sometimes called War Aims. This course was promoted and enjoined by the government. In Pennsylvania this enterprise was, as I recall, headed by
President E. E. Sparks of the Pennsylvania State College, a well-known scholar in history and political science.

As Chairman of the Curriculum Committee of the College, some of the local leadership in drawing up the curriculum for this course fell upon Professor Berthold L. Ullman, head of the Latin Department. As final authority a local committee was appointed by Chancellor Samuel B. McCormick. It consisted of full professors such as Professor John M. Mechlin, head of the Philosophy Department, professor Henry S. Scribner, head of the Greek Department, Professor Francis N. Thorpe, head of the Department of Political Science, Professor Ullman, head of the Latin Department, Professor H. J. Webster, acting head of the History Department and Professor Jesse H. White, head of the Department of Psychology.

Frequent meetings of this committee were held, without very satisfactory results. The committee represented too much specialized scholarship and was too large. A way out was found by making Dr. Louis K. Mauley, of the Department of Political Science, Convener (or Director) of the War Issues Department. Adequate organization and procedure quickly followed, much to the relief of all, not excluding the members of the original committee. Syllabi or outlines of the various divisions of the course were called for, soon provided, mimeographed for instructional purposes, and distributed among those expected to teach sections. According to the Pitt Weekly of November 13, 1918, "The syllabi were prepared as follows: History, Dr. H. J. Webster; government, Dr. Francis N. Thorpe; economics, Dr. F. D. Tyson; philosophy, Dr. Mechlin; modern literature, Prof. Lincoln R. Gibbs." Since I am fortunate in possessing some of these syllabi, I wish to enlarge upon this aspect of my topic.

I have no hesitation in saying that the course, whether called War Issues or War Aims, failed to correspond with its name and implied purposes. So far as I know it never rose above a course on the causes or origins of war in general and the World War in particular. Probably this was unavoidable and it may have been fortunate. The instructors probably felt an acute desire to explain these things to the prospective "cannon fodder" before them in the class room and give them both understanding and justifiable motivation for the future work expected of them.

The philosophy syllabus, drawn up by Dr. Mechlin, may be briefly described. It was divided into six sections; Section I was entitled, "The
Temper of the German People”; Section II, “The Idea of the State as Reflected in the Literature and Philosophies of the Warring Nations”; Section III, “The Problem of Race”; Section IV, “War: A Statement of the German Philosophy of War . . . .”; Section V, “Germany’s God”; and Section VI, “Problems of Peace and Reconstruction.” Each of these sections was provided with analyses, or subdivisions, and the more important references available in English.

The Modern Literature Syllabus, drawn up by Professor Gibbs, has four main sections, each with subdivisions. Section I was entitled, “The British and the German Imperialism,” with six subdivisions each; Section II, “Democracy and Absolutism,” with four main subdivisions, “German Absolutism, French Democracy,” “Russian Democratic Aspirations,” and “British and American Democracy”; Section III, “Literature of Reconstruction,” with two subdivisions—A. Organization of the world for peace, and B. Social and Economic Reorganization; and Section IV, “Literature Inspired by the War,” with sub-divisions, A. Poems, and B. Speeches and State Papers.

The Economics Syllabus, drawn up by Dr. Tyson, covered six main topics, each with three or four subdivisions. The six topics were: I. “Meaning of the Industrial Revolution for War”; II. “Resources of the Belligerents”; III. “The Economic Causes of War”; IV. “The German Struggle for Markets”; V. “War Time Regulation of Industry and Trade”; and VI. “Economic Factors in an Enduring Peace.”

To me Dr. Webster assigned the task of drawing up the historical syllabus. As you might conjecture, it was comprehensive and lengthy, containing provision for no less than thirty-one lectures or lessons. These lessons started with a discussion of the fundamental causes of the war, followed by lectures on international developments from 1870 to 1914. Lecture VIII was entitled “Indications that Germany and Austria Planned War Earlier than June 28, 1914,” and Lecture IX was styled “Extraordinary Military Measures of Germany Taken before June 28, 1914.” Lessons X and XI dealt with the “Austrian Ultimatum”; Lesson XII discussed the “Outbreak of War on the Danube”; Lesson XIII was entitled “The Failure of Diplomacy to Avert War”; and Lessons XIV and XV dealt with the violation of the neutrality of Belgium and Luxembourg and the entry of Great Britain into the war. The remaining lesson topics were as follows: XVI, “The War Spreads”; XVII-XVIII,
"The United States Enters the War"; XIX–XXVII, various campaigns; Lesson XXVIII, "American Aims in the War"; Lessons XXIX–XXX, "Various Peace Proposals"; and finally, Lesson XXXI, "Dealings of the Central Powers with Russia and Roumania." My recollection is that Professor Scribner, Professor George Ellis Jones, and I taught the historical sections of war issues. The bulletins furnish exact information about Dr. Jones's work saying that he had in three sections 158 S.A.T.C. students on his roll. The enrollment of Dr. Scribner and myself was approximately the same.

S.A.T.C. students came to class in military file, and in military clothing. Attendance was a military matter. Many of the classes were taught on the premises of the Oakland Methodist Church. The men were often tired and sleepy. It was virtually impossible to interest them in academic matters. Five hundred books, some of them in duplicates of ten copies, were bought by the Library for collateral reading in the War Issues Course. Such reading, however, was farthest from the desire of all but a few students. It bade fair to be a tough semester for instructors. Dean Will G. Chambers was impressed by "the spirit of unrest, anxiety, indifference and lack of concentration".

Hardly had this routine begun when it was halted. An epidemic of influenza was sweeping the country. On October 16, 1918, work at the University was stopped by quarantine. For S.A.T.C. men, only military drill was maintained. Other students left for home.

Then came the armistice and the end of the war. On November 26, 1918, the S.A.T.C. was disbanded. An episode was at an end. Owing to the influenza and disorganization, University functions were abnormal until after the Christmas holidays.

In regard to the third period of the academic year, 1918–1919, which opened on January 2 and closed on June 13, the language of the Chancellor's report, tells the general story: "Effort was made in all the Schools of the University to compress the full work of the year into this period of six months. Classes in some instances were continued until July 1st. Students in other cases took work in the Summer School in order to enter free of conditions with their classes next Fall. So far as possible holidays were omitted. The Spring vacation was shortened. Teacher and student alike put forth their full energy in order to accomplish the task. The effort was only moderately successful."
Another feature of the semester is expressed by Chancellor McCormick in two sentences: "Members of the Faculty absent on war service one by one returned to the classroom. Students in the service at home and abroad also returned in considerable numbers, until it became too late to be worth while to resume studies." In addition to the regular courses and sections new special sections had to be given for people from the extinct S.A.T.C. I had one section of pre-medical students.

In many ways the unique feature of the period from January 2 to June 13, 1919, was a course entitled, "Reconstruction." So far as I know this course was an inspiration of Chancellor McCormick's and definitely promoted by him. My recollection is that all students in the five undergraduate, non-professional schools were required to take the course.

The Course in Reconstruction Problems was divided into three divisions, historical, economic, and governmental. Corresponding to the three divisions of the course, the students were divided into three groups. Thus each division was given three times, each period covering about six weeks. Classes in the course met three hours weekly. My records show that three groups of students, averaging 250 and totalling 750, took the historical sections of the Reconstruction Problems course. Presumably these same 750 students took the economic and governmental sections of the course in rotation of six-week periods, one for the historical, one for the economic, and one for the governmental divisions of the course. Exactly why the total enrollment in the undergraduate schools was so low as 750, I cannot explain. My belief is that there were twelve sections, for each of the three six-week periods.

The syllabus of the historical section of the course was drawn up by me. It embodied the following topics: I. "Organization of the Course"; II. "Purpose of the Course"; III. "Causes of War or the Things Men Fight For"; IV. "Preventatives and Remedies for War"; V. "Nationalism"; VI. "Geographical Reorganization of the World"; VII. "Revolutions"; and VIII. "The Future". One of my students took careful notes on the lectures and kindly gave them to me. In keeping with common experience, I am astonished now as I review the character of these lectures of twenty-four years ago. Failure in the reconstruction of the world was not due to academic ignorance. Among my papers I find the topics suggested for discussion from the standpoint of government. They are,

Presumably this was the course of instruction in the governmental section taught by Drs. Mauley, Thorpe, Wright and Mr. Schramm.

I have not found the outline of topics used in the economic section of the course. Nor am I certain who taught the sections in economic reconstruction. Dean Albert B. Wright, of the School of Economics, claimed in his report that his school furnished two-thirds of the instruction in this course. Dean Chambers of the School of Education, asserted that Dr. George Ellis Jones, of the Psychology Department in the College, taught three sections. Dr. Jones asserts that he taught in the historical, not the economics, division.

In conclusion I wish to mention four additional matters about the school year, 1918-1919. The first of these is that the Reserve Officers Training Corps was organized on a voluntary basis in January and with great difficulty enrolled five more than the necessary minimum of 100.

The second is that, according to the Chancellor's report, the receipts from tuition, $316,919, were the largest, and the total income, $723,144, was the largest in the history of the University. A deficit of $90,456 was incurred. The state appropriation was $393,478.96.

The third is the extraordinary acclamation of the Armistice in November. No one who heard the noise will ever forget it. The rejoicing was universal.

The final matter concerns the arrival in Pittsburgh on Wednesday, May 7, 1919, of the survivors of the 28th Division. Detraining at East Liberty, the heroes marched to the Syria Mosque. The march of these men along Bayard Street was an unforgettable sight. It fairly made one's blood tingle. Girls from the University served meals to the soldiers in the basement of the Syria Mosque. An astonishing amount of food was consumed by the boys. It was a notable forenoon.