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Area Studies

DHS

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JHW

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July 26 memorandum on area studies

As a preliminary to discussion of area studies in American institutions I can put down some general responses to points made in the memorandum of JHW of July 26. I agree so completely with the preamble (the first 2 paragraphs) and the "postamble" on page 11 that such discussions will be easy and productive.

It is essential to limit and define the range of our concerns. Primary for any program will be genuine definition of subject matter and of personnel to use it. One man or more should be encouraged to define the logic of university and scholarly positions for old as well as new training and research programs on the cultures of the world. This includes our own. As examples of the men I have in mind for assignment I should take John Wilson of Chicago on the Near East, Berrien on Latin America, George Sanson on Japan. This task is easier for Humanities to do for itself than for SS, for the following reasons:

- a. It is possible to describe the processes of training men to use the essential languages; also to show why the language is a direct source of strength to any plan of work in Humanities. (The problem here is rather to get universities to discard clumsy requirements of language for their Ph.D. and to permit others than French and German to stand as requirements.)
- b. Humanities can describe the composite of literary, linguistic, and historical preparation of men readily with reference to each culture. They have the terms of reference in knowledge of age, variety, originality of each culture, and of its relevance today to its and to all other cultures. As a sketchy description of the position of humanities in American institutions of higher learning I should say that we are badly over-loaded at the upper levels with Renaissance and British research and teaching. We are losing our Classical strength. We

are getting Latin America into channels of philosophy, history, and language. We are in a disorganized but good position on China, Japan, and the Near East. On Russia and India we are virtually novices. We have neglected the cultures of Scandinavia and of Central Europe.

These subheads a. and b. show the complexity of the task and the impossibility of a general definition for Humanities. Happily we have the normal indicators of cultural relations through language, and national boundaries have served the humanists well for defining native or borrowed cultural elements. I should start the canvass of the present condition of so-called area studies from the point of view shown in the preceding paragraphs. I have, however, these following specific comments on the July 26 memorandum and on Redfield's statement of April 27:

Virtually all that Redfield says on general education is of secondary significance to RF and Humanities. Whether we do now have the power to give general education in a given culture or we lack the tools and men to give adequate and informing exposition for secondary schools, the first two years of college, or adults, general education follows the processes of maturation through informed specialization. (The attached copy of a review of August 6 illustrates this point.) Much of Redfield is valid as stress on the two tasks today of reduction and increase in the materials for general education, but this is a matter of definition. At most we probably should help with definition, certainly not with demonstration at the general education level.

On the paragraphs headed Procedure, pages 8ff., I have a comment due on the first paragraph that should make clear my idea regarding our division of labor by institutions. It would be impracticable and confusing to have officers of Humanities and Social Sciences conducting parallel discussions in one institution. For example, SS has an important matter up with several departments of Columbia University. Humanities should obviously keep entirely free from contacts there until asked for suggestions on minor items that will be used or discarded in SS. An instance in point is the fact that this week DHS expects to talk with Gerold Robinson regarding fellowships in Humanities for men in war service, but will not go beyond questions of personnel worthy of humanistic training.

Page 9, section 3, gives a working division of the items numbered 1 to 7. Humanities would agree at once on the statements of 3 and 5. It would not agree to 4 and 7. Item 6 is the most important of the untried suggestions. On August 5 DHS had a half-day talk with F. N. Robinson of Harvard, chairman of the Executive Committee of ACLS, and at that talk DHS raised a question of responsibility of the two

research councils to supply universities with broad definitions of policy. No single university will do this sort of thing for even its own men. We have almost universal proof of this fact, but for easy samples we might take Harvard, Chicago, and California in regard to long-range, constructive thinking on the importance of balanced planning in humanities. The task is far more difficult when you try the necessary step of getting institutions to recognize the strength of other institutions on any selective principle. It seems to DHS that the AOLS has failed to make its influence useful to professors and to presidents by setting out the aims of humanistic education, responsibilities in the matter of material and men, and even the natural advantages of particular institutions for particular tasks. We have only the lame effort of Earl Hamilton on Latin American studies as an example of the type of work the two councils should be able to do without implying dictation or favoritism.

On this point, with approval of RBF, DHS is having on September 27 a Pacific Coast conference on Far Eastern studies. The five institutions are to send an administrator and a faculty member for a careful review of the individual interests of each institution in this area. RBF has not approved any plan of action, but obviously some is implied and even expected at these institutions where Humanities has been making modest investments since 1935. At first thought DHS wishes to give all five the thing hardest for each to get. For the three state institutions of Colorado, California, and Washington that is the securing of money to spend outside the state. His idea would be to see that all of the five have a 5- or 10-year subsidy to provide \$5,000-\$10,000 a year for field work of permanent staff members in the appropriate country. These allotments should be sufficient so that the man, if he desires, could take his family. The estimate on a 5-year plan therefore runs to something like \$250,000, and to at least twice that amount for a 10-year plan. The percentage to each institution would necessarily reflect its significance for either teaching or research, its commitments with regard to staff in post-war years, and its own investments in other ways than for personnel.

Help to others in planning but to institutions directly for action on such proposals as this, now seems the appropriate way for us to open up in this kind of operation.

DAVID H. STEVENS

DHS:MPB

clipping and JHW's memorandum attached

see file
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Conference on
Far Eastern
Studies in the
Pacific area