

BULLETIN

OF

The Friends of St. John's College



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FOR the past twelve years St. John's College has held the leadership in the field of Liberal Arts education. To continue and expand this program, to secure a broader support than that of its students, alumni, and local friends, and to enlist the active support of its many friends throughout the country, a society to be known as "The Friends of St. John's College" has been organized.

The Friends can be of material assistance in many ways. They can acquaint others with the College and its significance for American education and invite them to become Friends of St. John's. Where it is feasible, they can organize seminars in their communities for the study of the great books and help create a deeper understanding and appreciation of Liberal Arts education. They can help correct misunderstandings about the College and its program and acquaint potential students with what St. John's has to offer. Those who can afford to do so can give financial assistance to the College.

Members will receive quarterly publications that will make them more closely informed about the program of the College. These publications will include such printed matter as the catalogue, the President's annual report, financial statements, and reprints of important lectures and articles about the program and Liberal Arts education. Should any friend or group of friends want to organize seminars for the study of the great books, the College will be glad to offer advice and furnish pertinent material.

Anyone interested in American education in the Liberal Arts and in the preservation of the free institutions of this country is eligible to become a Friend of St. John's College.

The new Liberal Arts program, begun at St. John's in 1937, aroused much interest and controversy by repudiating the elective system for a single unified curriculum required of all students. It replaced textbooks with the great classical books of literature, history, mathematics, science, philosophy, and religion — the so-called Hundred Great Books. It turned away from narrow specialization

and the informational lecture system and set up small tutorials and seminars in which students and faculty, by reading and discussion, learned together from the great teachers, the authors of the classic books. Its subject matter was the basic ideas of Western thought and their interrelation, through the study of which a student might earn his intellectual heritage from Homer to the present and learn to be a free and responsible person. With this study of the Great Books the program stressed the fundamental importance of thorough training in the twin symbolisms of language and mathematics as the basis of all truly human activity.

The twelve years since the inauguration of the new program have been difficult years of reorganization and financing, difficult years during the war, difficult years of post-war adjustment; and still the new program continues at St. John's without compromise and without serious modification. No longer can it be called "experimental." Despite the difficult years that the College has experienced, it has shown steady progress; its faculty and student body have grown; its students have made good records in graduate schools throughout the country; and it has won friends in the United States and Europe. Perhaps even more impressive evidence of the soundness of the program is the fact that in more recent years other American colleges and universities have changed their curricula in the direction pointed out by St. John's.

Many of these facts about the St. John's program have become widely known. It is not equally well known that the program places as much emphasis upon mathematics and science as it does upon language, literature, history, philosophy, and religion. Besides requiring the systematic study of the Greek, French, and German languages (two years of Greek and one each of French and German) and holding twice weekly for all four years the well-known seminars devoted to the great books, the College also requires four years of mathematics and four years of scientific laboratory work. The language tutorial and the mathematics tutorial each meet five days a week; the science laboratory requires two three-hour periods each

week. The College requires more work in mathematics and science than any other liberal arts college in the country.

Neither is it widely known that it is the policy of the College to select its students so as to have a representative group of young men, ranging from those with average to those with superior academic records and coming from all parts of the country. This policy comes from the conviction that a Liberal Arts education is the best type of education for anyone who is to assume responsibility in a democratic society. The economic background of the students is similarly varied; three-fourths of the present student body are dependent for their education on their own earnings, G. I. funds, or scholarships.

While the administration and faculty take pride in what the College has already accomplished, they are acutely aware of the need for extending the influence of the College. It is not enough, important as that task is, to transmit the liberal tradition to students on the campus and to adults in seminars in small communities and cities in the East. The College would like to encourage such adult seminars in other parts of the country. It also wishes to continue to be, and on a larger scale, a laboratory for liberal education where the faculty may engage in both teaching and research and have the opportunity to make creative contributions to education, literature, science, and philosophy in the spirit of the liberal tradition rather than in the spirit of modern specialized research. Through such an expansion of its work the college will continue to be one of the determining forces in American education during this time of world crisis.

This is why it has been decided to establish "The Friends of St. John's." By such a society of interested persons scattered throughout the country, this larger purpose of the College will be realized.